

YOUR HEALTH AND YOUR WATER COOLER

York Region Health Services is mandated to promote safe water practices. This fact sheet is part of a series to provide information and standards on this topic.

Why do I need to clean my water cooler?

Water coolers can harbour bacteria, algae, and moulds that affect the taste and appearance of your water but may also cause illness such as vomiting and diarrhea. Regular cleaning and sanitizing of these units can prevent these problems.

Steps for cleaning and sanitizing:

This procedure should be completed with each bottle change.

- If water cooler is refrigerated, unplug cooler unit and remove bottle.
- Empty reservoir by draining any remaining water in dispensing faucet.
- Disassemble cooler unit by removing splashguards, spill trays, water holding reservoir and faucet.
- Clean splashguards, trays and reservoir with soap and water and sanitize using a 100ppm bleach and water solution (one teaspoon (5ml) of household bleach to 4 cups (1L) of water). Allow a contact time of 45 seconds.
- When cleaning faucet area disassemble pipe from tap if possible and clean with soap and water. Sanitize faucet pieces by soaking in the bleach and water solution. Allow a contact time of 45 seconds. A small tap brush can be used to clean internal parts of the tap and pipe.
- Reassemble unit and flush with clean water prior to use.
- Store water cooler in a cool dry place where possible, to prevent algae growth.

Replacing the Bottle:

Wash hands with liquid soap and warm water before handling. Do not handle water cooler if you are feeling ill. Wipe the top and neck of the new bottle with a paper towel dipped in household bleach solution (1 teaspoon (5 ml) of bleach, 4 cups (1L) of water). Rubbing alcohol may also be used, but must be completely evaporated before placing the bottle in the cooler.

For more information you can contact a York Region Public Health Inspector, Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm toll-free at: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 4599.

Revised January 9, 2006

Other York Region Health Service Fact Sheets Available:

Safe Water Fact Sheet #1: Well Disinfection

Safe Water Fact Sheet #2: Emergency Water Treatment

Safe Water Fact Sheet #3: Private Well Water Sampling Procedure

Safe Water Fact Sheet #4: Interpreting Your Well Water Results

Safe Water Fact Sheet #5: Sodium in Drinking Water

Safe Water Fact Sheet #6: Public Health Concerns When Dealing With a Water Shortage

Safe Water Fact Sheet #7: Nitrate in Drinking Water

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EMERGENCY WATER TREATMENT

Water from a source that has not been tested for bacteriological quality should NOT be used for drinking, food preparation, *making infant formula and juices*, cooking, making ice, washing fruits, vegetables or brushing teeth. For these purposes, boiled water, bottled water or chlorinated water should be used. See *Safe Water Fact Sheet #3 - Private Well Water Sampling Procedure*.

Boil It

The water should be brought to a rapid rolling boil and boiled for 1 minute. Discard all ice made previously and disinfect the ice cube trays. *Make ice using boiled, cooled water.*

Note: Chemicals already present in the water will become more concentrated with boiling.

Chlorinate It

Add 1.25 ml (1/4 teaspoon) of unscented liquid household bleach (such as Javex) to 4 litres (1 gallon) of water. Mix well and allow to stand for a minimum of 15 minutes.

Other Water Use:

Bathing/Showering

Adults and teens may shower with untreated water as long as no water is swallowed. Older children could also be given a shower with a hand held showerhead, avoiding the face. Younger children should be sponge-bathed instead of bathing in a tub because they are likely to swallow tub water. For brushing teeth, use bottled or boiled water.

Handwashing

If you have to boil your water as a precaution due to a boil water advisory and there is no known outbreak of human illness then there is no need for additional hand disinfection with bleach or alcohol solution. If you choose to use an alcohol-based hand disinfectant make sure it contains more than 60% alcohol. Alcohol based disinfectants are widely used in the health care setting after washing hands or in situations when water is not available.

Cleaning and disinfecting

Toys should be cleaned and disinfected. If the toys are visibly soiled, wash them first with soap and water and then disinfect with a freshly prepared bleach solution (1/4 cup (about 60 ml) bleach in to 1 gallon (4.5 litres) of water). Dip toys in to this solution and air-dry them. Cloth and plush toys could be washed or dry-cleaned.

Countertops, chopping boards or utensils which have come into contact with raw meat should be washed with soap and hot water first, then disinfected with a bleach solution stronger than that used for emergency hand disinfection. Mix 1/4 cup (about 60 ml) bleach in to 1 gallon (4.5 litres) water for this purpose. Do not reuse or store this solution, but make it fresh daily.



Dishwashing

If your dishwasher has a hot setting, it safely disinfects dishes. If your dishwasher does not have a hot setting, after finishing the cycle, soak dishes for 1 minute in a solution of 1 oz (30 ml) of bleach mixed with 3 gallons of lukewarm water (13.5 litres). Let dishes air dry. If you wash dishes by hand, you could use boiled water for washing dishes. Dishes washed in soap and hot water can also be rinsed in boiled water or disinfected with the following bleach solution. Mix 1 oz. (about 30 ml) bleach in to 3 gallons (13.5 litres) of water at room temperature for at least 1 minute. Let dishes air dry.

Laundry

Continue doing laundry the way you usually do. If you have to launder sheets heavily soiled with faeces, carefully remove soil before you place the sheets into the washer, without much agitation of the cloth. Use rubber gloves when handling heavily soiled sheets.

Wading pools

The water is not safe to use in wading pools. Water usually gets into the mouths of small children, providing a possibility for infection.

Other Water Treatment

Filtered water should also be brought to a rolling boil for 1 minute before drinking or using it for cooking.

**A Public Health Inspector is available to answer questions Monday to Friday
8:30am to 4:30pm toll-free at: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 4599.**

Information Sources: Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Health Canada

Revised June 8, 2005

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Making Your Childcare Centre a *Healthy Environment*



A Fact Sheet for Childcare Operators and Staff

York Region Health Services is mandated to inspect all childcare centres to ensure compliance with food safety regulations, infection control, playground safety and safe water standards.

This fact sheet is provided for information and guidance to childcare centre operators.

What to Do When You Have No Water In Your Childcare Centre

All water outages must be reported to York Region Health Services Department – Health Protection Division at 1-877-464-9675, extension 4599. It is important to have a contingency plan in place, alternate emergency sites available, and if applicable, contact numbers for water haulers. You may also want to consider having a supply of bottled water, hand sanitizer, disposable utensils and disposable gloves on-site and ready for use. Remember to check best before dates or expiry dates for any supplies stored on-site. When there is no water available, the following control measures must be followed:

Water for Drinking

- Use only bottled water or water from a water cooler.
- Have water supplied from an approved water hauler.

Food Preparation

- Commercially bottled water must be used to wash, rinse or soak food products (i.e., fruits and vegetables).
- Food may be catered in from another commercially approved source (i.e., pizza).
- Pre-packaged food products may be provided.
- Single-use, disposable dishware and utensils must be used.

Handwashing

- Alcohol-based hand gel sanitizers, containing more than 60% alcohol, must be available. Ensure children are supervised when using hand gel sanitizers.
- Alternatively, disposable moistened towelettes may be used.

Disinfectant

- Have a premixed solution (i.e. no mixing with water required) available on-site at all times **or** have a supply of commercially bottled water available to mix disinfectants.





Diapering

- Use disposable gloves, alcohol/gel sanitizers and disposable moistened towelettes when diapering children.
- Staff and children's hands must be cleaned with hand gel sanitizer after diapering.
- Disinfect diaper areas with a premixed solution after each child has been changed.

Toileting

- Ensure a supply of water is available for flushing toilets manually (i.e. manual fill method).

Laundry

- Ensure any laundered items are cleaned and disinfected with detergent and 1/4 to 1/2 cup of disinfectant at a laundry facility.

If your childcare centre is without water for more than 24 hours, consider alternate operating sites until water is available at your centre. Water usage should not resume until the lines are flushed and the chlorine residual is acceptable (0.05 mg/L Free Available Chlorine or 0.25 mg/L Combined Chlorine).

In the event of an outbreak, contact your Public Health Inspector for further direction.

For further information, contact
York Region Health Services *Health Connection*
1-800-361-5653

