

Boil Water Advisory: Best Practices for Making Your Water and Food Safe

Boil water advisories tell you to boil your tap water before using it. Boiling kills germs in the tap water that could make you sick. During any type of drinking water advisory, do not consume water (in either liquid or solid form) from appliances connected to your water line. This includes the water and ice dispensers in your refrigerator or freezer.

Boil your tap water even if you filter it. For example, still boil tap water if it has been through a home water filter or a pitcher that filters water.

How to Properly Boil Your Water

1. Bring water to a rolling boil (where bubbles rapidly break the surface).
2. Let it boil continuously for at least 3 full minutes.
3. Allow the water to cool naturally.
4. Store it in clean, sanitized, covered containers.

Food Preparation and Considerations

If tap water that is contaminated comes into contact with the food you consume, it can readily lead to foodborne illnesses during a boil water advisory.

- **Cooking and Washing Food:** Use boiled or bottled water to wash fruits and vegetables, make ice, mix baby formula, or cook food. Do not rely on the cooking process unless the surface of food will reach boiling temperature (about 201°F at this elevation) for at least 3 minutes (e.g., making pasta).
- **Making Ice:** Destroy all ice currently in your freezer's ice maker. Wash and sanitize the ice bins, and only make new ice using cooled, boiled water or bottled water.
- **Coffee Makers & Appliances:** Most home coffee makers do not keep water hot enough for long enough to kill pathogens. Use pre-boiled or bottled water in your machine.

Washing Dishes

- **By Dishwasher:** Only use your dishwasher if it has a sanitizing cycle or reaches a final rinse temperature of at least 150°F (66°C).
- **By Hand:** Wash dishes with hot soapy water, rinse them, and then soak them for 1 minute in a separate basin containing a sanitizing solution (1 tablespoon of unscented household bleach per gallon of warm water). Let them air dry completely.

Personal Hygiene

- **The Golden Rule:** You can use tap water and soap to wash your hands, but you must use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol) immediately afterward.
- If you are preparing food or caring for someone who is sick, use boiled or bottled water with soap to wash your hands instead.
- **Bathing and Showering**

- Adults and older children can shower or bathe in tap water, provided they are careful not to swallow any water.
- Infants and Toddlers: Give them sponge baths using boiled or bottled water to eliminate the risk of them swallowing water or putting wet toys/washcloths in their mouths.
- Wounds: If you have open wounds, cuts, or are immunocompromised, use boiled or bottled water for bathing to prevent infection.
- **Dental Care**
 - **Brushing Teeth:** Use only boiled or bottled water. Do not rinse your toothbrush or your mouth with tap water.

Other Considerations

- **Pets:** Pets can get sick from the same waterborne pathogens as humans. Provide them with boiled and cooled water or bottled water.

More Information

1. [Drinking Water Advisories: An Overview from CDC](#)
2. [How to Make Water Safe in an Emergency](#)
3. [How to Create an Emergency Water Supply](#)