

## **Boil Water Advisory Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Why was I advised to boil my tap water?**

You may be asked to boil your tap water during an emergency . . .

- if tests show that harmful microorganisms could be present in the water,
- if the water pressure drops due to equipment failure or power outages,
- because of water main breaks or repairs,
- if the water source has been flooded, or
- during other situations that warrant special action to protect consumers' health.

### **2. How does boiling make my tap water safe?**

Boiling the water kills microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, or protozoans that can cause disease. Boiling makes the tap water microbiologically safe.

### **3. How long should I boil the water?**

Bring tap water to a full rolling boil, let it boil for one minute, and let it cool before using.

**In an emergency, boiling your tap water is the preferred method  
for making sure tap water is safe to drink.**

**The following are acceptable alternatives if you cannot boil your tap water:**

- Use bottled water.
- Use liquid household bleach to disinfect tap water. The bleach product should be recently purchased, free of additives and scents, and should contain a hypochlorite solution of at least 5.25%. If the water is clear, add 8 drops of bleach (about  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon) to each gallon of water. Add twice the amount of bleach (16 drops, or  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon) to each gallon if the water is cloudy. After adding bleach, the water should be stirred and allowed to stand for at least 30 minutes before use.
- Water purification tablets may also be used to disinfect tap water by following the manufacturer's instructions.

### **4. Should I boil the tap water used to make baby formula?**

Yes, only use boiled tap water or bottled water for mixing formula for your baby.

### **5. Should I boil the tap water used in cooking?**

All tap water used in cooking must first be boiled for one full minute.

**6. Do I have to boil my dishwashing water?**

No, adding a tablespoon of household bleach such as Clorox® to a sink full of tap water should be sufficient to treat the water used for washing dishes. Bleach should also be added to the water for rinsing dishes. Allow dishes and utensils to air dry before reuse.

You may wash dishes in an electric dishwasher, but be sure to use it with its heating elements turned on. After washing in an electric dishwasher, dishes should be rinsed in water with a tablespoon of bleach added, and allowed to air dry before reuse.

**7. Should I boil tap water for brushing my teeth?**

Yes. Any tap water that might be swallowed should be boiled before use.

**8. Is it necessary to boil water to be used for hand washing? Is any special soap necessary?**

If handling food you should wash with soap and tap water, and then use an alcohol-based sanitizer. If sanitizer is not available, use boiled water for washing hands. For general bathing or dirt removal from hands using soap and tap water is sufficient.

**9. What about my bath water?**

There is no need to boil water for bathing or showering. Adults, teens, and older children, can shower or bathe, though they should avoid getting water in the mouth or swallowing the water. Infants and toddlers should be bathed using boiled or bottled water. Care should be taken to prevent water from getting into deep open or post-surgical wounds. Consult your physician or health care provider for wound care instructions

**10. Can the water be used for laundry?**

Yes

**11. Water for cooking**

Use water that has been brought to a continuous boil for at least one minute when preparing food or when using water as an ingredient for food preparation. Or use commercially bottled water.

**12. Food Preparation**

Discard any ready to eat food that was prepared prior to boil water notice. Only use water that has been brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute

**13. Is it safe to use tap water in my coffee machine?**

No. Water boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit, and coffee machines do not get hot enough to hold water at a rolling boil for at least one minute. Only use the coffee machine with boiled water, bottled water from a known source, or treated water.

**14. Do I still have to boil tap water if I have a water treatment device?**

Yes. Devices designed to improve the taste, odor, or chemical quality of the water, such as activated carbon filters, will not remove harmful microorganisms from the tap water. Boil the tap water to make sure it is safe.

**15. Can I use ice from the refrigerator/freezer ice machine?**

No. Ice may be contaminated. Throw it out. Turn off the ice maker.

**16. Can I let my pets drink tap water?**

Yes. Dogs and cats have much more powerful stomach acid than humans. They are better able to tolerate water contaminated with E. coli.

**17. How will I know when it is safe to drink my tap water?**

You will be notified when tests show that the tap water is safe to drink. You may be asked to run water to flush the pipes in your home before using your tap water or be given other special instructions. The announcement will be placed on the Mid-Michigan District Health Department Web site at [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org).