

What to do During a Boil Water Notice

These general precautions should be followed when there is a boil water notice in effect for household and public uses.

Note: precautions may vary depending on the circumstances of the notice.

Boiled water is required for:

Drinking purposes: Includes all beverage concentrates such as fruit juice and iced tea where water is added.

Food preparation: Includes washing fruits and vegetables that will not be cooked. Water used as an ingredient does not need to be boiled prior to use, providing it will be brought to a boil during the cooking process.

Water Fountains/Water Bottle Filling Stations: Close access to water fountains and water bottle filling stations. While the units with a filtration component are approved to remove some contaminants, they are rarely capable of eliminating pathogens (disease causing organisms) such as E. coli.

Coffee Machines: Coffee machines usually produce water heated to about 70-80 degrees Celsius, which is sufficient to destroy pathogens. This temperature must be maintained for a sufficient amount of time to ensure that all harmful organisms are destroyed. Let the coffee stand for at least five minutes before drinking.

Brushing teeth: Includes daily oral hygiene such as cleaning dentures and using a water pick or water flosser.

Infant formulas: Prepare formulas by using boiled tap water or bottled water.

Making ice: Freezing does not destroy most pathogens. Bacteria and viruses can survive in frozen products for long periods of time. Discard any ice made from contaminated or potentially contaminated water including ice from a countertop or refrigerator ice machine.

Home canning: To be safe postpone home canning until the boil water notice has been rescinded.

Beer and wine making: To be safe postpone beer and wine making until the boil water notice has been rescinded.

Water for pets: Veterinarians that were consulted recommend that drinking water for pets including dogs, cats, birds and reptiles should also be boiled. Information on water quality for livestock can be accessed at the [BC Ministry of Environment Water Quality Objectives](#) website.

Immune-Compromised Individuals People who are immune-compromised should always boil their tap water when their water is from a surface water source or a groundwater well at risk of containing pathogens for the purposes above. Stay informed about the status of your water supplier. [Access HealthLinkBC File #56, Preventing waterborne infections for people with weakened immune systems for more information.](#)

Mechanical, household dishwashers: Residential home-style dishwashers may not provide a high enough temperature to destroy all pathogens. Dishwashing units that reach 82 degrees Celsius (180 Fahrenheit) for ten seconds (or an equivalent time-temperature relationship) during the final rinse cycle will destroy pathogens. To optimize dishwasher sanitization, you should consider:

- Using the highest temperature setting possible and
- Using the heated dry cycle on the dishwasher.

How to boil tap water

- Tap water should be boiled for **one minute**. Use any clean pot or kettle. Kettles that have automatic shut offs are acceptable.
- After water is boiled it can be stored in covered food grade containers at room temperature or in the refrigerator. Shaking water in a container, pouring the water between two containers, and/or adding a pinch of salt can help restore flavour.

When will the Boil Water Notice be lifted?

The Boil Water Notice will be lifted once the water is safe to drink. Your water supplier should be contacted directly for updates or you can monitor their social media, web page, and other information platforms. You can also review the Island Health's [Current Drinking Water Notices](#) page to determine if the notice is active or not.

After a Boil Water Notice has been lifted:

- Flush all water-using fixtures for 1 minute.
- Run cold-water faucets and drinking fountains for 1 minute before using the water. Drain and flush all ice-making machines in your refrigerator.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Drain and refill hot water tanks set below 45 C (normal setting is 60 C).
- Change any pre-treatment filters (under sink style and refrigerator water filters, carbon block, activated carbon, sediment filters, etc.).

Alternatives to Boiling Water

Although there are alternatives, not all of them will be feasible or practical in all situations. It will depend on how much water you need and what you need it for. Safe alternatives to boiling water include:

- Using commercially prepared bottled water,
- Obtaining water from an approved source that is not on a boil water notice. Ensure you have pre-cleaned and sanitized containers available for filling water from that approved source.
- If the water is clear and boiling water is not practical, you can use the following as a guide to using bleach:

Gallons of water to disinfect (equivalent shown in brackets)	Amount of Household bleach (5%) to add
1 gal. (4.5 litres)	2 drops (0.18 ml)
2 1/5 gal. (10 litres)	5 drops (0.4 ml)
5 gal. (23 litres)	11 drops (0.9 ml)
10 gal. (45 litres)	22 drops (1.8 ml)
22 gal. (100 litres)	3/4 teaspoon (4 ml)
45 gal. (205 litres)	1 1/2 teaspoons (8 ml)
50 gal. (230 litres)	1 3/4 teaspoons (9 ml)
100 gal. (450 litres)	3 1/2 teaspoons (18 ml)
220 gal. (1000 litres)	8 teaspoons (40 ml)
500 gal. (2200 litres)	6 tablespoons (90 ml)
1000 gal. (4550 litres)	6 1/2 ounces or 12 tablespoons (180 ml)

Food Facilities

Additional considerations for food facilities and food service establishments that prepare food for the public:

The following uses do not require boiled water but require additional cleaners or sanitizers:

Cleaning food contact surfaces: Food contact surfaces are all those surfaces that food comes into contact with during the food preparation process. These include counter tops, cutting boards and chopping blocks. Food contact surfaces must be washed with clean water and then sanitized using an acceptable sanitizing agent. Do not rinse these surfaces after sanitizing and allow them to air dry prior to use. Sanitizing agents for food contact surfaces include unscented household bleach, iodophors, and quaternary ammonia compounds. To prepare stock bleach solutions add 2-4 ml of 5% bleach per liters of water (1 tablespoon per gallon). This will make a 100 to 200 ppm chlorine solution. Test strips must be used to verify sanitizer concentration.

Hand washing: Proper hand-washing techniques should be sufficient using warm water and liquid soap, lather for at least 20 seconds, rinse with water and dry with single use towels. Individuals should follow-up with an alcohol-based sanitizer (at least 60%) following hand washing for further precautions.

Dishwashing by hand: Dishes washed by hand must be sanitized for 30 seconds in a separate sink using a bleach solution (2-4 ml of bleach per liter of water or 1 tablespoon per gallon) after the dishes have been washed and rinsed. Do not rinse the dishes after sanitizing and allow them to **air dry** prior to being used. Attempting to wash and sanitize dishes in the same sink at the same time is not recommended because soap, grease and food particles interfere with the sanitizing process.

Dishwashing: Commercial dishwashers and glasswashers are designed to provide an adequate sanitizing step after the dishes have completed a wash and rinse cycle.

- High temperature dishwashers must reach 82°C at the manifold for 10 seconds during the final rinse cycle to provide an adequate sanitize cycle. Temperatures must be monitored and recorded prior to washing any dishes in a Food Facility setting. Temperatures can also be monitored with temperature sensitive labels designed for 71°C at the plate surface or with a maximum hold thermometer.
- Chemical sanitizing dishwashers must provide a rinse cycle of >50ppm chlorine or 12.5-25ppm iodophore to provide an adequate sanitize cycle. The concentration of chemicals must be monitored with test strips and recorded prior to washing any dishes in a Food Facility setting.
- Manual dishwashing may be performed using the three-compartment sink method to wash, rinse and sanitize. Washed and rinsed dishes must be sanitized by immersing in 100-200ppm bleach solution for 30 seconds and left to air dry prior to being used.
- Alternatively, use single service utensils and dishware

Food Preparation: Uncooked foods or beverages that have been prepared using contaminated water must be discarded. Foods cooked to an internal temperature of 74°C or higher during a boil water notice should be safe.

Ice /Soda/Syrup Machines: These machines cannot be used during a boil water notice as they have a direct water line feed from the main plumbing. These machines must be shut off, drained, and fully cleaned and sanitized once the notice is rescinded and before the units can be used again. In-line filters must be backwashed or replaced after the notice is rescinded.

Produce Mistors: Produce misters must be turned off during the boil water notice. Manual misting could be completed with boiled water in a cleaned and sanitized food grade spray bottle.

Dipper Wells: Dipper wells must not be used during a boil water notice. Sanitized, individual scoops should be used for each flavour. Once the boil water notice is rescinded, the dipper well must be cleaned and sanitized before use.

Water Bottling Facilities/Water Dispensing Units: Bottled water production must cease unless the facility is equipped with treatment and disinfection equipment that has previously been assessed for the ability to provide a 4-log reduction of viruses, a 3-log reduction of protozoa, a turbidity of less than 1 NTU, and the complete absence of total coliforms and *E. coli*. Should adequate treatment not be available, the water bottling equipment must undergo a flushing and disinfecting procedure after the notice is rescinded and before water bottling can commence.

Similarly, water dispensing units must be disabled until the boil water notice is rescinded unless the above treatment and disinfection requirements can be met. A flushing and disinfection process must be undertaken before the water dispensing unit can be used once the boil water notice has been rescinded.

Personal Service Establishments

Additional considerations for facilities that provide tattooing, piercing, and other invasive procedures:

Instrument/Equipment Cleaning: Use of single-use and disposable tools and equipment is recommended during a boil water notice. An alternative potable water supply should be used for cleaning, disinfecting or sterilizing tools and equipment that are not discarded after one use. Environmental surfaces such as floors and walls may be cleaned and disinfected following the manufacturer instructions. Commercially prepared cleaners, disinfectants, and sanitizers which are not diluted with water onsite can continue to be used.

Skin Cleaning and Wound Care: Follow the procedures in the Ministry of Health [Guidelines for Personal Services Establishments](#) for skin cleaning and wound care. An approved skin antiseptic, such as 70% isopropyl alcohol should be used to clean skin prior to tattooing and in the situation of a bleeding wound.

Laundry: Laundering cloths, towels, and other fabrics does not require any special steps during a boil water notice.

Child Care Facilities

Additional considerations for facilities that offer childcare including child care facilities, summer camps, early-age school grades, and other care environments:

Toy Cleaning: Following the usual cleaning process is sufficient provided that toys are disinfected with an adequate disinfectant as required through the standard process. This can include the use of an approved disinfectant that is already in place at the facility or via a commercial dishwasher with an approved sanitizing cycle.

Snacks and Meals: Formula, pablum/cereals, etc. must be prepared with boiled or bottled water. Cleaning and sanitizing instructions outlined in the Food Facilities section can be followed. These details would apply to highchairs trays, silicone food trays, and other wares intended for infants and toddlers.

Water Tables: Water tables should be filled with boiled water or the use of them suspended during a boil water notice.

Showering and Bathing Facilities: In settings such as summer camps, showering and bathing facilities are available for children, youth, and staff to use. Everyone should be advised to avoid ingesting the water while showering or bathing.

Swimming Pools, Hot Tubs, Whirlpools

Access to drinking water: Reasonable access to drinking water is a requirement of [B.C. Reg. 296/2010 Pool Regulation](#). Usual access points such as water fountains, water bottle filling stations, and drinking water designated sinks must be closed from access by the public and access to an alternative water source must be provided.

Pool Water: Provided pool water chemistry is balanced within regulatory limits, there are no additional considerations during a boil water notice for indoor or outdoor pools.

Shower Facilities: Showering during a boil water notice can continue to occur. Consuming the water should be avoided. Parents and guardians could be cautioned when entering the pool or signage could be provided at showers to communicate a potential hazard to infants and younger children who may ingest water during the shower.