WHAT DOES A BOIL WATER NOTICE MEAN?

A boil water notice means tap water should be boiled to kill any microorganisms that may be present before used for drinking, cooking, washing dishes, washing food preparation areas, until tests verify the water is safe. Tests typically take two to three days.

What kinds of tests are done? Why does it take so long to get test results?
City Utilities technicians collect water samples using specific procedures that ensure accurate testing. This allows a laboratory time to incubate the samples, a step that is required to grow bacteria if any are present.

How long should water be boiled?
Follow the steps below for the safest and most effective method of water disinfection:
• Fill a pot with water
• Heat the water until bubbles break the surface
• Once the water reaches a rolling boil, let it boil for 3 minutes
• Turn off the heat source and let the water cool
• Pour water into a clean container with a cover for storage

How does boiling water make it safe to drink?
Disease-causing bacteria, viruses and parasites are destroyed by high, sustained heat. Boiling does not remove them from the water, but it does kill them, preventing them from causing illness.

How do I sanitize my containers?
Containers may need to be sanitized before using them to store disinfected water.
To sanitize containers:
• Use unscented bleach (bleach that does not have an added scent)
• Make a sanitizing solution by mixing 1 teaspoon (5 milliliters) of unscented household liquid bleach in 1 quart (32 ounces, 4 cups or about 1 liter) of water
• Pour this sanitizing solution into a clean storage container and shake well, making sure that the solution coats the entire inside of the container
• Let the clean storage container sit at least 30 seconds, and then pour the solution out of the container
• Let the empty container air dry or rinse it with clean water that has already been made safe, if available

Never use a container to store drinking water if it previously stored milk, fruit juice or any toxic solid or liquid chemicals. If disinfected water has been stored for more than five days, follow the steps listed above to re-disinfect it before use.

Should I use bottled water?
You may choose to use bottled water if it is available.

Can I use water directly from the tap for making coffee, tea, or frozen juice?
No. Water intended for drinking must be vigorously boiled for at least three full minutes before being used to brew coffee or tea, or being mixed with formula, drink concentrates or juices.

What should I do about feeding my baby?
• If you breastfeed, continue to do so.
• If you use or supplement with baby formula:
  • Use ready-to-use baby formula, if possible
  • Prepare powdered or concentrated baby formula with bottled water. Use boiled water if you do not have bottled water. Disinfect water for baby formula if you cannot boil your water or don’t have access to bottled water (see above for directions on how to use bleach to disinfect water)
• Wash and sterilize bottles and nipples with boiled or disinfected water before use.
• If you cannot sterilize bottles, use single-serve, ready-to-feed bottles.

Can I use my coffee maker, ice machine, and water from my refrigerator or soda dispenser?
Do not use water from any appliance connected to your water lines. This includes the water and ice dispensers in your refrigerator/freezer. Use boiled, bottled or disinfected water to make ice — freezing does not disinfect water. If a boil water order was issued, consult the owner’s manual to find out how to sanitize appliances after the boil order is lifted. This is not necessary for customers under a boil water advisory unless City Utilities notifies customers to the contrary.

I have a water filter – doesn’t that protect me?
Water filters in refrigerators and pitchers do not remove bacteria. For under-sink filters, read the manual or check with your installer to determine the filter's bacteria-removal capabilities. If in doubt, boil the water.

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**WHAT DOES A BOIL WATER NOTICE MEAN?**

**Is it safe to use a dishwasher?**
Household dishwashers generally are safe to use if the water reaches a final rinse temperature of at least 150°F or if the dishwasher has a sanitizing cycle. To wash dishes by hand:
- Wash and rinse the dishes as you normally would using hot water
- In a separate basin, add 1 teaspoon of unscented household liquid beach for each gallon of warm water
- Soak the rinsed dishes in the water for at least 1 minute
- Let the dishes air dry completely

**Can I do laundry?**
It is safe to wash clothes in tap water while under a boil water advisory or order.

**Can I use tap water to brush my teeth?**
No. Use boiled, bottled or disinfected water to brush your teeth.

**Is it safe to take a shower or bath?**
Yes, it is safe to take a bath or shower, but be careful not to swallow any water. Use caution when bathing babies and young children. Consider giving them a sponge bath to reduce the chance they might swallow water.

**What if I drank from the tap accidentally or before I learned about the boil water notice?**
If you accidentally drink tap water, don’t panic – the chances of becoming ill are slim. If you do get sick, the symptoms are similar to food poisoning: nausea, diarrhea, cramps, and possibly a mild fever.

**What should I do if I have symptoms?**
First and foremost, avoid dehydration. If symptoms occur, drink plenty of disinfected fluids to prevent dehydration. Avoid drinks with caffeine, such as soda, coffee and tea because caffeine is a diuretic and causes people to lose water. If you are concerned about your health or the health of a family member, contact your health care provider.

**Can I shave?**
Yes, you can shave as usual.

**Do I need to worry about my fish or aquatic pets (e.g., reptiles, frogs)?**
Most germs that infect people do not infect reptiles or fish. If you must fill your fish tank while under a boil water advisory or order, check the water’s chlorine levels, which may or may not change slightly. Contact your local pet store or veterinarian for more advice.

**When I turn on the faucet, the water sputters. Why?**
This is caused by air in water lines, and is likely a result of repairs City Utilities made to the system. Turn on your tap slowly and run the water until the sputtering stops.

**When I turn on the faucet the water is discolored. What should I do?**
Flush water pipes by running the water until it is clear. Do not wash clothes if the water is discolored. Wait until the water runs clear at the tap. Wash a load of dark clothes first.

**What should I do if my water pressure is low?**
Check the faucet screens for trapped particles. Remove the screens and clean out any particles. Put the screens back on the faucet. If low water pressure persists after checking these items, please contact Dispatch.

**Can I water my plants with tap water?**
Tap water is safe for house plants and outdoor irrigation of ornamental plants.

**Is it safe to give pets tap water?**
Many pets are susceptible to the same diseases as humans and can transmit the diseases to their owners’ families. Provide them with boiled or bottled water.