

# How to Use Water Safely in Your Child Care Facility During a Boil Water Advisory

*Child Care Facilities may operate during the boil water advisory as long as the conditions outlined below are strictly followed.*

## What is a boil water advisory?

A boil water advisory is issued when harmful germs (e.g., *E.coli* bacteria, *Giardia* parasite) may be in a drinking water supply. Drinking water contaminated with these germs can make people and animals very sick. Boiling will kill the germs and make the water safe to drink.

## What immediate steps must a school take when a boil water advisory is issued?

- Safe water must be provided for children and staff.
- Turn off or disconnect drinking fountains.
- Water table play should be reviewed (see section below).
- Provide children and staff washrooms with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol content. Inform children and staff that the hand sanitizer should be used after hands are properly washed and dried. See attached sign below.
- Signs should be posted at all faucets, including the entrance, kitchen area and washrooms as a reminder of the boil water advisory and not to drink the water. See attached signs below.

## When a boil water advisory has been issued, how should the water be used?

When a boil water advisory has been issued, **do not** use the tap water to:

- drink
- prepare foods
- make baby formula
- make juice
- make ice
- wash fruits or vegetables
- brush teeth

During a boil water advisory use boiled water, bottled water or water from another safe public supply not affected by the advisory. Throw away any ice in your freezer made with the water and sanitize the ice cube trays (see next page). Make ice with boiled water that is cooled.

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### What is the right way to boil water?

To boil water, bring it to a rolling boil for at least one minute. Only boil as much water as you can safely lift without spilling. Put the pot on the back burner. Be careful of the scalding hazard.

### What special precautions should people with a weakened immune system take?

If a child has a weakened immune system, have the child's parents consult with a doctor.

### Can a drinking water fountain still be used?

No. Turn off or disconnect drinking fountains.

### Is the water safe to drink if an on-site water filtration device is used?

If you have a water filtration device, **do not** use the water during a boil water advisory. Many filtration devices do not remove harmful germs. Check with the manufacturer to find out what your filtration device removes.

### Is bottled water or water from self-serve water dispensers safe to use?

Sometimes you can use bottled water, but it depends on when and how the water was bottled. Bottling plants and/or water dispensers that use local water must treat the water to remove harmful germs. Check with the Environmental Public Health Office (phone numbers below) about bottled water brands or water dispensers that have been treated so the water is safe. You can also use water bottled from another public water supply not affected by the advisory.

### Is there further information on safe food preparation for a public food establishment?

Follow the procedures listed in the document, "How to Use Water Safely in Your Food Establishment During a Boil Water Advisory". This document is available on the Alberta Health Services website, or by contacting your local Public Health Inspector.

### GENERAL HYGIENE DURING A BOIL WATER ADVISORY

#### Can tap water be used for handwashing?

During a boil water advisory, you can use the water to wash your hands. Wash your hands with tap water and soap, making sure to lather for at least 20 seconds. Rinse your hands well with running water and dry them with a paper towel. After you dry your hands, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

#### Can tap water be used for face or hand wiping cloths?

No. Use alternative safe drinking water (bottled or previously boiled and cooled) for wiping faces or hands of infants, toddlers or children. Children's face wipes can also be used.

#### Can tap water be used for brushing teeth?

During a boil water advisory, **do not** use tap water to brush teeth. Use boiled water that is cooled, bottled water or water from another safe source.

#### Can tap water be used for washing laundry?

During a boil water advisory, you can continue washing laundry like normal. Ensure that a mechanical dryer (hot drying method) is used to completely dry the material.

#### Can tap water be used for general cleaning purposes?

The water supply can be used for general cleaning of contact surfaces such as walls and floors using regular cleaning and disinfection practices.

#### Can I use tap water to prepare sanitizer for high-risk surfaces?

High risk surfaces such as diapering areas can be disinfected using your normal procedure with tap water and ensure that surfaces have enough time for complete air drying to take place. Refer to the Health and Safety Guide for Operators of Child Care Facilities for further information.

#### Is the water safe to fill water play areas for children?

Water table play during a boil water advisory is discouraged. However, the following process will disinfect the water for safe play. Use water that has been previously boiled and cooled or bottled water.

### PROCEDURES TO TAKE AFTER A BOIL WATER ADVISORY IS ENDED

- Flush all water-using fixtures by running the hot and cold taps for five minutes. If your service connection is long or complex (e.g. large building), consider working with maintenance staff to coordinate flushing.
- For multi-storey and large buildings, maintenance staff can flush taps starting on the bottom floor closest to the service connection by running the hot and cold taps for five minutes. Once every faucet on the entire floor has been flushed for five minutes, proceed to the next floor, and continue the procedure until the fixtures and faucets on all floors are flushed.
- Ensure equipment with water line connections such as refrigerator water and ice dispensers are drained, flushed, cleaned and disinfected according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Flush, drain, clean and disinfect cisterns that contained the affected water source.
- You may need to drain and refill hot-water tanks if there was a loss of power or gas to the tank for an extended period (e.g. evacuation events).
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle according to manufacturer's recommendations.

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Contact us at 1-833-476-4743 or [submit a request online](#) at [ahs.ca/eph](https://ahs.ca/eph).

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# Warning

Boil Water Advisory in Effect

**This Water is not Safe for Drinking**



For more information, please visit [www.ahs.ca/eph](http://www.ahs.ca/eph) or contact Healthlink Alberta at 811.



**Alberta Health  
Services**

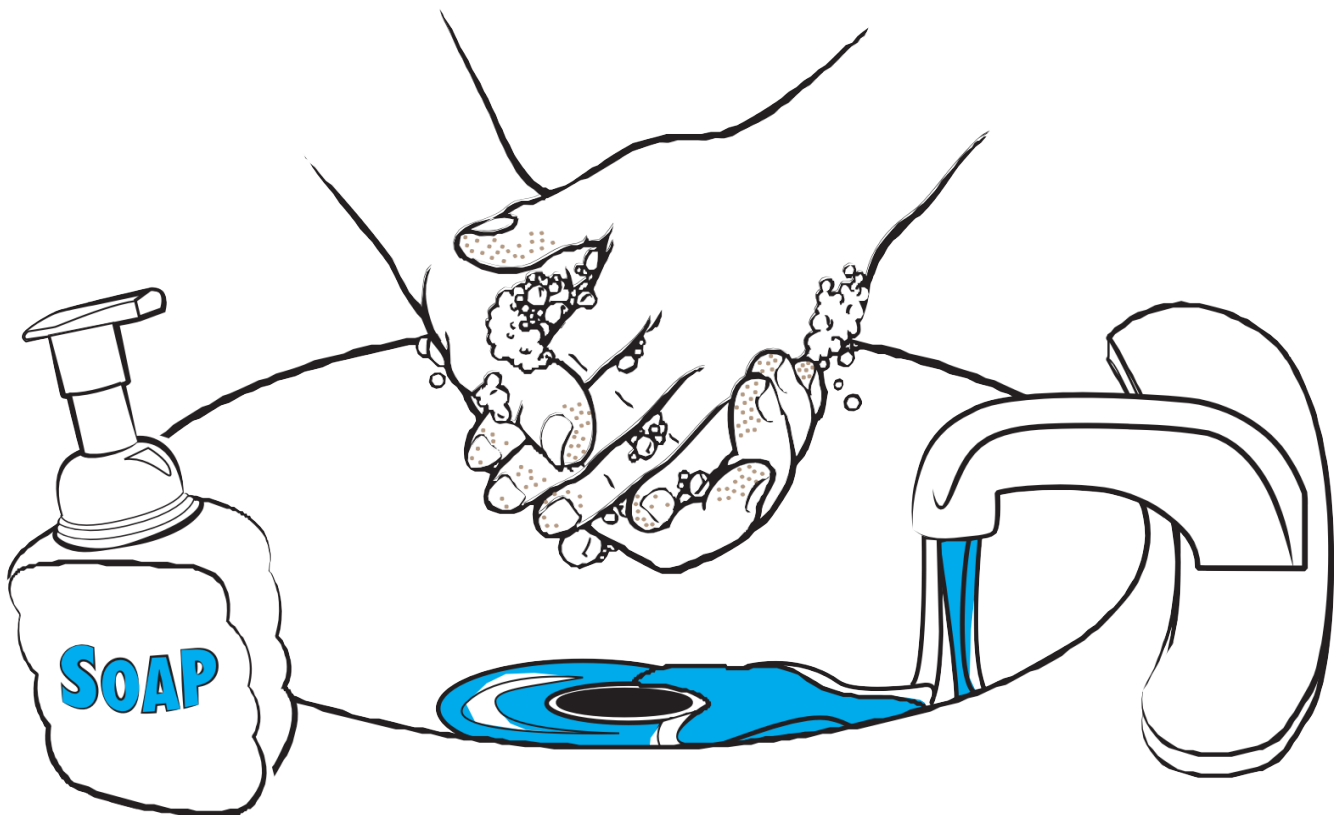
Contact us at 1-833-476-4743  
or [submit a request](#)  
online at [ahs.ca/eph](http://ahs.ca/eph).

# Warning

Boil Water Advisory in Effect

**WASH YOUR HANDS**

Apply hand sanitizer after handwashing



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