

How to Use Water Safely in Your Swimming Pool During a Boil Water Advisory

Swimming Pools 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 pool operator take when a boil water advisory is issued?

- Any water supplied for clients use for drinking water purposes must be safe.
- 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.
- Turn off or disconnect drinking fountains.
- Provide public and staff washrooms with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol content.

Does the pool need to be closed during a boil water advisory?

There is no need to close down the pool during a boil water advisory unless otherwise specified by Alberta Health Services. Chlorine is not very effective against *Cryptosporidium* under normal swimming pool operations. If *Cryptosporidium* is potentially present in the drinking water supply, a CT value of 15300 is needed to destroy this organism. Therefore all fill water may need to be treated to a CT of 15300 prior to use.

*Contact your public health inspector to determine if this procedure needs to be implemented. Your public health inspector will evaluate if the *Cryptosporidium* procedure is required.*

To calculate the CT Value of 15300, use the following:

CT = C (concentration of free chlorine in mg/L) times T (time in minutes)

Example: 20 ppm x 765 min (i.e. 12.75 hours) = 15300

Normal pool use and operation can resume, after filling the pool and only after the required CT inactivation value has been achieved. The free chlorine and pH levels should also have been returned to the normal operating range allowed by Alberta Health Services. Any water added to the pool, either through manual methods or from automated fill systems, needs to be treated to the CT 15300 or be from an alternative source, that is not at risk for contamination. If the automated fill cannot be isolated, the pool cannot be operated during the boil water advisory. Additional treatment such as full stream UV installed on the fill line may be considered as equivalent to treating the swimming pool to a CT of 15300.

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 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.

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 not to burn yourself or your child.

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

For clients with weakened immune system, entering the pool during a boil water advisory should not pose any additional risks, as the pool operator would have taken any needed special precautions.

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 the water safe to drink or cook with 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.

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 showering?

Healthy individuals may take showers with untreated tap water, if they are careful not to swallow any tap water. Younger children (elementary school age and younger) should not use the water for showering, unless properly instructed and directly supervised.

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 floors and walls using regular cleaning and disinfection practices.

Considerations for staff and multipurpose rooms that have food preparation areas?

Wash kitchen surfaces with soap, then rinse and sanitize with a bleach solution or the usual sanitizer provided for food contact surfaces. Make a new bleach solution every day (this is because bleach breaks down quickly once it is mixed with water), so it works well to kill germs.

To prepare the sanitizer solution (sanitizer strength of 200 mg/L chlorine solution), add one teaspoon of liquid household bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite) to one litre of room temperature water. Spray or pour this solution onto the food contact surfaces and let sit for a minimum of two minutes. Other food grade sanitizers can be used in place of chlorine sanitizer. Vinegar is not an acceptable disinfectant.

Is there further information on safe food preparation in 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.

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 the manufacturer’s recommendations.

Contact us at 1-833-476-4743 or [submit a request online](#) at 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 or contact Healthlink Alberta at 811.



**Alberta Health
Services**

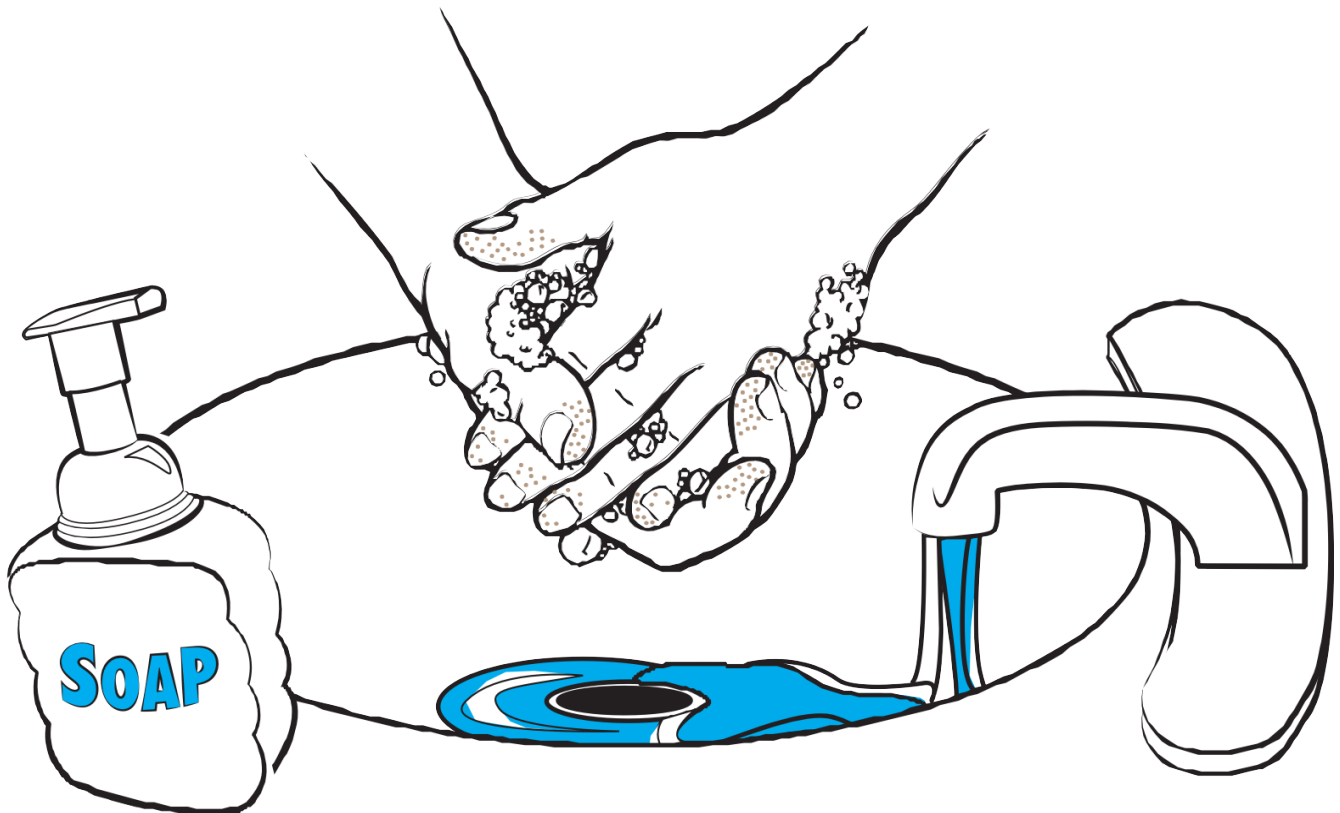
Contact us at 1-833-476-4743
or [submit a request](#)
online at ahs.ca/eph.

Warning

Boil Water Advisory in Effect

WASH YOUR HANDS

Apply hand sanitizer after handwashing



For more information, visit ahs.ca/eph or contact Healthlink Alberta at 811.



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