

## Guidelines for Child Care Centres During a Drinking Water Advisory

**Important:** Be sure you know what kind of advisory has been issued.

The Medical Officer of Health issues a drinking water advisory when the water has been determined unsafe for drinking and **the problem cannot be corrected by boiling**. Drinking water advisories may be issued for chemical contamination of water supplies. A drinking water advisory is different from a boil water advisory.

**This fact sheet is a guideline only.** It is important to listen for media reports and watch for notifications from the Health Unit with specific information regarding the drinking water advisory. Special precautions may be necessary depending on the nature of the contamination.

### Where do I start?

Identify a “**Person-in-Charge**” who will be responsible for ongoing management of the emergency situation and ensure ongoing compliance with safety requirements for your childcare centre.

### Drinking Water

- 1. Do not boil water.** Boiling may concentrate chemical contaminants.
- 2. Secure a supply of potable (drinkable) water by:**
  - Using commercially bottled water.
  - Hauling water from another unaffected approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container or arranging for the use of a licensed drinking water hauling truck.
- 3. Shut off drinking water fountains** (or cover to prevent access).
- 4. Disconnect all equipment directly plumbed to the water system** (ice machines, soft drink machines, coffee machines etc.).
- 5. Post signs at all faucets**, in the kitchen area, and washrooms to advise of the drinking water advisory and not to drink the water.

## Water for Food Preparation and Cooking

### Immediately:

- Discard ready-to-eat food that was prepared with potentially unsafe water prior to the issuance of the Drinking Water Advisory (coffee, juice, jello, ice etc.). If you are unsure of which foods to discard, consult with a public health inspector.
- Restrict menu to items that require little or no water, and little preparation.
- Use commercially bottled water, water hauled from another unaffected approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container, or water from a licensed drinking water hauling truck for food preparation activities.

**Important:** All water used to wash and prepare fruits and vegetables, and any water used as an ingredient in a ready-to-eat food product must be from one of the sources described above.

## Hand Washing and Personal Hygiene

**Important:** Watch for notifications from the Health Unit with specific information regarding the nature of the drinking water advisory. In some cases the water may not be suitable for any personal use.

- Unless special instructions have been released, wash hands as usual.
- If an alternate source of potable water, (as described above), must be used for hand washing, post directions at all sinks.

Teeth brushing must be completed with potable water (as described above).



## Water for Cleaning and Sanitizing

**Important:** Watch for notifications from the Health Unit with specific information regarding the nature of the drinking water advisory. In some cases the water may not be suitable for any cleaning or sanitizing.

- Use single service utensils where possible; or
- Use potable water (as described above) to clean and sanitize equipment and utensils.

### In the kitchen:

- The use of mechanical dishwashers may not be safe during a Drinking Water Advisory. Watch for media reports or consult with a Public Health Inspector to determine if the use of mechanical dishwashers is appropriate.
- Using potable water (as described above), ensure proper manual dishwashing is followed if utensils must be washed by hand. Refer to the “**Dishwashing – 3- Sink Method**” poster for direction.

### In the facility:

- Use potable water (as described above), to mix with chemical disinfectants used in environmental cleaning.

## Medical Procedures

- Use potable water (as described above) for any procedures that use the facility water supply.

For returning to normal operations after the water supply is restored, refer to the factsheet “**Returning to Normal Operation after a Water Disruption**” for guidance.

**Reference:** Adapted with permission from the Middlesex London Health Unit

For more information, please call the Health ACTION Line at **1-800-660-5853** or visit our website at **[www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org)**