

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

The Medical Officer of Health issues a boil water advisory when the water is unsafe for drinking based on:

- results of bacteriological testing, or
- an occurrence of illness in the community that has been linked to consumption of the water,
- other information indicating that the water is unsafe to drink, or
- as a precaution, if there is a loss of pressure in the water system.

This factsheet is a guideline only. Special procedures may be necessary and additional instructions may be provided. Watch for media reports and notifications from the Health Unit. The boil water advisory remains in effect until the Medical Officer of Health lifts it.

### 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

#### Immediately:

- Secure a supply of potable (drinkable) water by:
- Boiling the water. Water should be brought to a rolling boil, boiled for 1 minute, allowed to cool and stored in a covered sanitized container.

**Caution:** *To avoid scalds, place the pot on the back burner and only boil as much water in a pot as you can comfortably lift without spilling.*

- Using commercially bottled water.
- Hauling water from another unaffected approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container.
- Chlorinating small batches of water. To chlorinate, add 1.25 mL (1/4 tsp.) liquid household bleach to 4.5 (1 gallon) of water. Mix and let stand for 30 minutes. Use regular household bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite). Do not use scented bleach, bleach with added cleaners or alternative bleaches.
- Discard any ice or drinks made with untreated tap water.
- Shut off drinking water fountains. (If fountains cannot be shut off, cover with a large plastic bag.)
- Post signs at all drinking fountains, in the kitchen area, and washrooms to advise of the boil water advisory and not to drink the water.

**Supervise children around these water sources.**



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)**

## Water for Food Preparation and Cooking

- Discard ready-to-eat food that was prepared with potentially unsafe water prior to the issuance of the Boil 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 potable water as described above for food preparation activities. All water used to prepare fruits and vegetables, and any water used, as an ingredient in a ready-to-eat food product (coffee, juice, jello, infant formula, ice etc.) must be from one of the sources described above.
- Disconnect all equipment directly plumbed to the water system (ice machines, soft drink machines, coffee machines etc.).

## Hand Washing

- Heat potable water and place into an insulated container with a spigot that allows clean, warm water to flow over the hands. Provide liquid soap in a dispenser and paper towels as usual.
- It is recommended to follow-up with an alcohol based hand sanitizer after drying your hands.
- Post hand washing directions at all sinks.

**Ensure proper supervision of children at all times.**

## Water for Cleaning and Sanitizing

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

### In the kitchen:

- Commercial dishwashers that use hot water 82°C (180°F) or above for the final rinse may continue to be used. Ensure units are functioning adequately. Low temperature dishwashers that use chemical sanitizers may not be effective against water contaminated with parasites.
- If you are unsure of the reason for the Boil Water Advisory, consult a public health inspector.
- 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.

## Diapering

- Use disposable gloves to change diapers and wash hands with potable water (as described above) and follow-up with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after drying your hands.
- Wash children’s hands with potable water (as described above) or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Disinfect the diapering area between children with your usual sanitizer, following the manufacturer’s concentration and contact time. Wash your hands.

# FACT SHEET

## Toy Washing

- Dishwasher safe toys can be cleaned in a commercial dishwasher that uses a hot water-82°C (180°F) or above final rinse.
- Toys washed by hand are to be washed and sanitized as per the manual dishwashing procedure. Refer to the “Dishwashing – 3 Sink Method” poster for instructions.
- Plush toys and dress-up clothes can be washed using the directions for laundry.

## Laundry

- Launder items in the washing machine using a hot water rinse cycle. Dry in the dryer for minimum 30 minutes.
- Ensure that staff has access to potable water (as described above) for hand washing.

## Water for Play

- Discontinue the use of water play tables for the duration of the Boil Water Advisory.
- Discontinue activities/crafts that use water, unless potable water (as described above) is used.

## Personal Hygiene

- Teeth brushing activities must be completed with potable water as described above.

## Medical Procedures

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

### Surveillance for Enteric Illness (diarrhea and/or vomiting)

- Follow standard enteric precautions and outbreak management protocols for staff and children with diarrheal illness.
- Staff and children with enteric illness symptoms must be excluded from the childcare setting. They must not return until they have been symptom-free for at least 24 hours. If the Boil Water Advisory is issued as a result of a community outbreak, a 48-hour exclusion, and/or negative stool samples may be necessary before returning to the childcare setting. For specific outbreak direction, consult the Infectious Diseases Prevention and Control team.

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