

Guidelines for Long-Term Care Homes 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. In Lanark County listen to Lake 88.1 and in Leeds, Grenville County listen to CFJR 104.9 or BOB 103.7 for updates.

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 institution.

Drinking Water

Immediately:

1. Secure a supply of potable 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.
 - Do not boil water. Boiling may concentrate chemical contaminants.
2. Shut off drinking water fountains.
3. Disconnect all equipment directly plumbed to the water system (ice machines, soft drink machines, coffee machines etc).
4. Post signs at all faucets, in the kitchen area, and in washrooms to advise of the drinking water advisory and not to drink the water.

Important: Take special care with residents who have cognitive deficiencies that may impair their understanding of the drinking water advisory procedures.

FACT SHEET

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 sourced 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 and denture care must be completed with potable water (as described above).
- Unless special instructions are provided, bathing may continue as long as residents do not consume the water.

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.

In the personal service setting:

- Use potable water (as described above), to mix with chemical disinfectants used in cleaning and disinfecting work surfaces, scissors, combs/brushes, nail clippers etc.

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**

FACT SHEET

Medical Procedures

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

Public Pool or Spa

Initially:

- Close pools and spas
- Depending on the reason for the issuance of the Drinking Water Advisory, operation of pools and spas may not be recommended. Watch for media releases, or consult with a Public Health Inspector to determine if operating the pool or spa during the Drinking Water Advisory is appropriate.

If it is determined to be safe to use the pool or spa,

- Ensure adequate disinfection levels are maintained
 - Pool: minimum 0.5ppm chlorine residual
minimum 2.0ppm bromine residual
 - Spa: maintain 5-10ppm chlorine or bromine residual
- Operate pool in compliance with Public Pools, RRO 1990, Reg.565 and the spa in compliance with Public Spas O.Reg 428/05

For returning to normal operations after the drinking water advisory is lifted, refer to the fact sheet **“Returning to Normal Operations after a Water Disruption”** for guidance.