

DRINKING WATER ADVISORY (DWA) commonly asked questions



Public Health
Santé publique
SUDBURY & DISTRICTS

When a drinking water advisory has been issued

Why is a DWA issued?

A drinking water advisory is issued when the Ontario Drinking Water Standards are not met and when there are conditions that cannot be corrected by boiling or disinfecting the water.

The extent of restriction on water use depends on the situation and the reason for issuing the advisory. Always follow Public Health's recommendations on water use.

Can you use water when a DWA has been issued?

Important: The water should not be used for drinking, making infant formula and juices, cooking, making ice, washing fruit and vegetables, or brushing teeth. For these purposes, water from an alternate source, such as bottled water, should be used.

If I have a water filtration device installed does this make the water safe for drinking or cooking?

No. The water should not be used for drinking, cooking, making juice and infant formula, making ice, washing uncooked fruit and vegetables, or brushing teeth until further notice. Use water from an alternate source for these purposes.

Are babies receiving breastmilk at risk?

Breastfeeding is important. Continue to breastfeed your child. If a mother has been drinking water that may have been affected, it is only in very rare circumstances that breastmilk may be contaminated. If there is an issue, Public Health will notify local residents through media channels.

Are babies receiving infant formula at risk?

Infant formula should be used after making an informed decision. During the advisory do not use tap water to prepare the formula. If you have refrigerated prepared infant formula or boiled water, it should be discarded. For these purposes, water from an alternate source, such as bottled water should be used. Like tap water, all water from alternative sources must be brought to a rolling boil for at least 2 minutes before being used for formula.

Where can I get water?

Bottled water can be purchased from local suppliers such as grocery stores, convenience stores, and department stores. In many cases, the municipality will provide residents with stations where they can obtain larger quantities of water.

How can I disinfect a container for storing drinking water during a DWA?

Use a container that has only been used for water or food. Clean the container with hot soapy water. Rinse the container with clean water from an alternate source not affected by the DWA. To disinfect your container, mix 50 ml of household bleach with 5L of water from an alternate source not affected by the DWA. Shake the container for at least 1 minute. Use the same solution to disinfect the cap, lid, and mouth of the container. Empty the container and let air dry. Replace the lid.

Can I use the water for handwashing?

Hands should be washed using potable water obtained from an alternative source. Alternatively, you can use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, containing more than 60% alcohol. These products are widely used in the health care setting after washing hands or in situations when water is not available. If hands are not visibly soiled alcohol based hand sanitizers alone are sufficient. However if the hands are visibly soiled a pre-moistened towelette, such as those used for cleaning babies during a diaper change, can be used to remove the dirt then use the alcohol-based hand sanitizer to kill bacteria.

Can I take a bath or shower?

Normally adults and teens may shower with untreated water as long as no water is swallowed. Older children could also be given a shower with a hand-held showerhead, avoiding the face. Younger children should be sponge-bathed instead of bathed in a tub because they may swallow tub water. If there is an issue where bathing should not be done, Public Health will notify local residents through media channels.

Can I use tap water to fill wading pools for children during a drinking water advisory?

No. Tap water is not safe to use in wading pools because small children may get potentially contaminated water in their mouth, which could adversely affect their health.

Can I wash my dishes?

You should not wash your dishes with the water from your home until after the drinking water advisory has been lifted. If possible, use disposable dishware and utensils, or use water from an alternate source.

Can I do laundry?

Yes, but you should be aware that tap water may discolour your clothing.

What should I do during a DWA if my doctor has told me that I am immunocompromised?

Always follow the advice of your health care provider or dietitian. You might be advised to use water from an alternate source, even when a drinking water advisory has not been issued.

When a drinking water advisory has been lifted

What should I do when the advisory has been lifted?

If you use the municipal water supply, you should run each of your cold water taps for at least 5 minutes or until the water runs clear. Large-volume users (for example, hospitals, schools) may need to run cold water taps for a longer period of time on first use. To get rid of sediment, screens should be removed, rinsed, and replaced.

Should I expect anything different with my water?

It is possible that you may detect a slight taste of chlorine during the first use. The municipality may have been using a higher level of chlorination.

What if I see or taste something unusual in my water?

If you have any concerns, call your municipal office.

Should I test my water if I am on the municipal water supply?

If you use water from the municipal system, do not take water samples to Public Health for testing. The municipal water supply is routinely tested by your municipality.

For more information, call Public Health Sudbury & Districts at 705.522.9200, ext. 398 or toll-free at 1.866.522.9200.

Public Health Sudbury & Districts office locations:

Sudbury – Main Office
PH: 705.522.9200
Toll-Free: 1.866.522.9200

Chapleau
PH: 705.860.9200

Espanola
PH: 705.222.9202

Manitoulin Island
PH: 705.370.9200

Sudbury East
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