



## Boil Water FAQs

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/pdf/DWACT-2016.pdf>

### **Q. How do you determine if water is safe?**

A. Chlorine residuals in the distribution system are a primary indicator of water quality. Citizens will perform bacteria sampling, as well, to confirm the water quality.

### **Q. Who decides to issue the boil water order?**

A. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management provides direction to water utilities on when a boil water advisory must be issued.

### **Q. Should I drink bottled water during an advisory?**

Yes. If bottled water is available, that is the best option until Citizens says otherwise. If you do not have bottled water available, the next best option is to boil your tap water to make it safe to drink.

### **Q: Should I boil my water even if it's filtered?**

Yes. Most kitchen and other household water filters do not remove bacteria or viruses. Filters collect germs from water, so all water filters should be replaced after the advisory has been lifted. Anyone changing the cartridges should wear gloves and wash hands afterwards. Flush water through the filter and then replace the removable part of the filter unit as needed.

### **Q: Can I use my coffee maker, ice machine, or water or soda dispenser?**

A: Do not use water from any appliance connected to your water lines. This includes the water and ice dispensers in your refrigerator/freezer. Most kitchen and other household water filters typically do not remove or kill all bacteria or viruses.

- Use bottled, boiled, or disinfected water to make coffee and ice.
- When the boil water advisory is lifted, consult the owner's manual to find out how to sanitize appliances.

### **Q: Can I use ice from my refrigerator/freezer?**

- Do not use ice from ice trays, ice dispensers, or ice makers.
- Throw out all ice made with tap water.
- Make new ice with bottled, boiled, or disinfected water.

### **Q: What should I do about preparing food and beverages? How should I wash fruit, vegetables, and food preparation surfaces?**

- Wash fruits and vegetables with bottled, boiled, or disinfected water.
- Use bottled or boiled water that has cooled to cook food.

- Use bottled, boiled, or disinfected water when preparing drinks, such as coffee, tea, and lemonade.
- Wash food preparation surfaces with bottled, boiled, or disinfected water.

**Q: What should I do about feeding my baby?**

If you're not breastfeeding:

- Use ready-to-use baby formula, if possible.
- Prepare powdered or concentrated baby formula with bottled water. Use boiled water if you do not have bottled water.
- Wash and sterilize bottles and nipples before use with bottled or boiled water.
- If you cannot sterilize bottles, try to use single-serve, ready-to-feed bottles.

**Q. What symptoms should I be looking for if I already drank the water?**

A. Anyone experiencing symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting or abdominal cramps, with or without fever, should contact their healthcare provider. Symptoms associated with waterborne illness are also associated with other illnesses.

General guidelines are available from Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.

**Q: How do I wash dishes during a boil water advisory?**

- Use disposable plates, cups, and utensils, if possible. If you do not have disposable dishes, follow the instructions below.
- Household dishwashers generally are safe to use. If possible, set your dishwasher so it is using a hot water rinse or sanitizing cycle.
- To wash dishes by hand:
  - Wash and rinse the dishes as you normally would using hot water.
  - In a separate basin, add 1 teaspoon of unscented household liquid bleach for each gallon of warm water.
  - Soak the rinsed dishes in the water for at least 1 minute.
  - Let the dishes air dry completely before using them again.

**Q: Should I give my pets boiled water?**

Yes. Pets can get sick from the same contaminants as people. It is a good idea to give them bottled, boiled, or disinfected water. Boiled water should always be cooled before using.

**Q: Do I need to worry about my fish or aquatic pets (e.g., reptiles, frogs)?**

Most germs that infect people do not infect reptiles or fish. If your water system is using more chlorine or changing disinfection, be cautious about changing the water in your fish tank or aquarium. Standard aquarium operations require removal of chlorine and chloramines, which can be toxic to fish and reptiles. Contact your local pet store or veterinarian for more information.

**Q: Is it safe to water my garden and house plants?**

Yes, you can use the tap water for household plants and gardens.

**Q: Is it safe to let my children play in a kiddie pool filled with tap water?**

No. Due to the high chance that children will get water in their mouth while playing in a kiddie pool, we recommend that you avoid using your kiddie pool during the boil water advisory.

**Q: Can I use tap water to wash my hands?**

In many situations, you can use tap water and soap to wash your hands. Follow the guidance of your local public health officials or emergency managers. Be sure to scrub your hands with soap and water (warm or cold) for 20 seconds and rinse them well under running water. It is important to dry hands completely with a towel or by letting them air dry.

**Q: Can I use tap water to brush my teeth?**

No. Use bottled water or boiled water that has cooled to brush your teeth.

**Q: Is it safe to take a shower or bath?**

Yes, it is safe to take a bath or shower, but be careful not to swallow any water. Use caution when bathing babies and young children. Consider giving them a sponge bath to reduce the chance of them swallowing water.

**Q: Is it safe to shave?**

Yes, you can shave as usual.

**Q: Is it safe to do laundry?**

Yes, it is safe to do laundry as usual.

**Where can I get more information?**

- [Creating & Storing an Emergency Water Supply](#): CDC provides guidance on the amount of water needed for good health, as well as how to prepare and store safe water before and during an emergency.
- [Hygiene, Handwashing, & Diapering](#): CDC provides guidance on recommended hygienic practices when water is not available or is contaminated.
- [A Guide to Water Filters](#): CDC maintains a guide for choosing filters that remove pathogens, chemicals, or toxins.
- EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791