

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS WHEN LAB ANALYSIS INDICATES BACTERIA IS PRESENT IN A WATER SUPPLY

How do I use water when it is contaminated with bacteria?

Water should NOT be used for drinking, making infant formula and juices, cooking, making ice, washing fruits, vegetables or brushing teeth. For these purposes, boiled water or bottled water should be used. The water should be brought to a rapid rolling boil and boiled for 1 minute. If there are children in the home, place the pot on the back burner to avoid scalds. Boil only as much water in a pot as you can comfortably lift without spilling. Discard all ice made previously and disinfect the ice cube trays. Make ice using boiled, cooled water.

Can I take a bath?

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 bathing in a tub because they are likely to swallow tub water.

Can I use the water for handwashing?

Water can be used for handwashing after the following emergency water treatment: Place 1.5 oz (about 45 ml) liquid household bleach in 10 gallons (45 litres) water. Mix and let stand for at least 10 minutes prior to use.

How else can I disinfect my hands?

You can use alcohol-based hand disinfectants, 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. The wet wipes used for cleaning babies at diaper change are not effective for disinfecting hands and should not be used for this purpose.

My child was ill with diarrhea. Should I clean/disinfect toys?

Yes, toys should be cleaned and disinfected. If the toys are visibly soiled, wash them first with soap and water and then disinfect with a freshly prepared bleach solution (1/4 cup (about 60 ml) bleach in to 1 gallon (4.5 litres) of water). Dip toys in to this solution and air-dry them. Cloth and plush toys could be washed or dry-cleaned.

I have a dishwasher. Is it safe to use?

If your dishwasher has a hot setting, it safely disinfects dishes. If your dishwasher does not have a hot setting, after finishing the cycle, soak dishes for 1 minute in a solution of 1oz (30 ml) of bleach mixed with 3 gallons of lukewarm water (13.5 litres). Let dishes air dry.

I wash dishes by hand. How do I disinfect them?

You could use boiled water for washing dishes. Dishes washed in soap and hot water can also be rinsed in boiled water or disinfected with the following bleach solution. Mix 1 oz. (about 30 ml) bleach in to 3 gallons (13.5 litres) of water at room temperature for at least 1 minute. Let dishes air dry.

What is disinfection?

Disinfection is a cleaning process which destroys most disease-causing micro-organisms (pathogens).

How do I disinfect countertops, chopping boards or utensils which have come into contact with raw meat?

Countertops, chopping boards or utensils which have come into contact with raw meat should be washed with soap and hot water first, then disinfected with a bleach solution stronger than that used for emergency hand disinfection. Mix 1/4 cup (about 60 ml) bleach in to 1 gallon (4.5 litres) water for this purpose. Do not reuse or store this solution, but make it fresh daily.

Should I change the way I am doing laundry?

No, continue doing laundry the way you usually do. If you have to launder sheets heavily soiled with faeces, carefully remove soil before you place the sheets into the washer, without much agitation of the cloth. Use rubber gloves when handling heavily soiled sheets.

Is the water safe to fill wading pools for children?

No, the water is not safe to use in wading pools. Water usually gets into the mouths of small children, providing a possibility for infection.

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

No. Filtered water should also be brought to a rolling boil for 1 minute before drinking or using it for cooking.

My doctor told me I am immunocompromised. What should I do?

Always follow your physician's and dietitian's advice. You might be advised to use bottled water or to boil water for drinking/cooking, even in the absence of a boil-water advisory.

Source: Ministry of Health and Long Term Care

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