

What is a boil water advisory?

In the United States, our drinking water supply is normally safe. Yet diseases that spread through water remain a very real problem. If something has happened that could allow the water supply to become contaminated, a boil water advisory may be issued. There are a variety of reasons for such an advisory. For instance, there may have been a water line break, flooding, or intentional or unintentional contamination of the water supply.

When a boil water advisory is issued, the following precautions should be taken:

- Boil water vigorously for 1 minute before using it. Boiling it longer than 3 minutes may adversely affect water quality and taste.
- Use only bottled or boiled water for drinking, diluting fruit juices, and all other food preparation.
- If non-potable water (water from the affected water supply) is used for handwashing, bare-hand contact with any food is prohibited. (Normally, bare-hand contact is only prohibited for ready-to-eat foods).
- For prolonged boil water advisory use only approved potable water source.
- Dispose of ice cubes, and do not use ice from an automatic icemaker. Remake ice cubes with water that has been boiled, or purchase bagged ice from an area not under advisory. Flush the icemaker water line after the advisory is lifted.
- Disinfect dishes and other food contact surfaces by immersing them for at least 1 minute in clean tap water that contains 1 teaspoon of unscented household bleach per gallon of water.
- Stop using fountain pop machines connected to a contaminated public water supply.
- Please monitor media outlets for notification about when the advisory is lifted. Once an advisory or order is lifted, typically at least 24 hours after issuance of the advisory or order, you will need to take additional steps before resuming normal operations.

Frequently Asked Questions about What to Do After a Drinking Water Advisory

Q. When I turn on the faucet, the water sputters. Why?

A. You have air in your lines. Turn on your tap slowly and run the water until the sputtering stops.

Q. The water is discolored. What should I do?

A. Flush water pipes by running the water until it is clear. Do not wash clothes/fabrics if the water is discolored.

Q. Why does my water have a strong smell?

A. The smell is probably chlorine. Often, water systems will increase chlorine levels to disinfect the pipes.

Q. What should I do if my water pressure is low?

A. Check the faucet screens for trapped particles. Remove the screens and clean out any particles. Put the screens back on the faucet.

Q. Do I need to clean out my faucets?

A. Yes. You should flush your faucets after the drinking water advisory.

- Turn on the main water valve.
- Turn on the cold water tap at all faucets and run the water until you feel a change in temperature (i.e., the water gets noticeably colder). This may take several minutes. Begin with the faucet that is highest up in your home or building and then open the other faucets one at a time moving from the highest floor to the lowest.

Q. Do I need to clean appliances?

A. Yes. Read the owner's manual for directions to clean appliances such as water softeners and filter units.