



Storing Water During A Boil Water Advisory

What is a boil water advisory?

A boil water advisory is issued when harmful germs (e.g., *E.coli* bacteria, *Giardia* parasite) may be in a drinking water supply. Drinking water contaminated with these germs can make people and animals very sick. Boiling will kill the germs and make the water safe to drink after cooling.

When a boil water advisory has been issued, how should the water be used?

When a boil water advisory has been issued, **do not** use the tap water to:

- drink
- prepare baby formula
- make juice
- make ice
- prepare foods
- wash fruits or vegetables
- brush teeth
- fill a wading pool
- give to pets

During a boil water advisory use boiled water, bottled water or water from another safe public supply not affected by the advisory.

To make the water safe, **bring to a rapid rolling boil for at least one minute**. Boil only as much water in the pot that one can comfortably lift without spilling. An electric kettle with auto-shut off feature is effective. Ensure water is cooled appropriately before using or before direct handling to prevent scalds.

What types of containers can be used to store water?

Store boiled water in clean, sanitized, plastic, glass, fibreglass or enamel-lined metal food-grade containers. Make sure they are sturdy and will not break easily. If storing water for a prolonged period of time, the container should be air-tight. Water storage containers may be purchased at department or camping supply stores, or use clean, disinfected 2-litre plastic pop bottles with tight-fitting screw caps to store water.

If the water tastes flat, leave space for air in the container and shake it well a few times. This will add air to the water, which will make it taste better.

Do not store water in:

- containers that were used to hold chemicals (e.g., bleach, laundry detergent)
- milk or juice containers made of plastic or cardboard

Can tap water be used to clean and sanitize storage containers?

Wash and rinse the containers with hot tap water, rinse, and then sanitize to reduce the amount of germs to a safe level. Soak the containers for at least two minutes in a bleach solution of 1 tablespoon of household bleach in 4 litres (20 cups) of warm water. Let the containers air-dry completely before storing boiled water.

How much water should be stored?

Store at least a 3-day supply of 5 litres of water per day for each person or pet in the home. This would mean at least 15 litres of stored water for each person or pet. If you can, store a 2-week supply, which would be about 70 litres per person or pet.

How should water be stored?

Seal water containers tightly, label them with the date of preparation, and store in a cool dark place, but prevent from freezing. Rotate water every six months. Keep away from gasoline, kerosene, pesticides or similar substances.

For commercially bottled water, keep the water in its original sealed container. Once opened, use it and do not store it further. Keep for up to one year, and check the expiry date before use.

For more information about using water during a boil water advisory, contact the local Environmental Health Officer.

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