

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW IF YOU ARE TOLD TO BOIL YOUR DRINKING WATER

Why Should You Boil Your Drinking Water?

Boiling is one method for temporarily removing bacteria such as E. Coli from water used for drinking, food preparation, dishwashing or toothbrushing. These organisms are more commonly found in lakes and rivers than in well water but can impact well water if flooding occurs in an area.

You may be asked to boil your water:

- following natural events that disrupt your water supply, such as a flood, earthquake, or power outage;
- following a disruption to the water system or power loss, due to a line break or system repairs; or
- when otherwise instructed to do so by your local health department or state department of health

Preparing for Emergencies

Be prepared for unexpected events or weather emergencies by keeping bottled water on hand, or by regularly storing water for emergencies. Stored water should be kept in a cool place and needs to be replaced every two months. Other safe sources of water around your home can be obtained by melting ice cubes or draining your hot water tank.

Caution:

Boiling water is not always recommended, such as when nitrate, arsenic, lead, or other toxic metals or chemicals are present in the water. High levels of nitrate can lead to blue baby syndrome in infants under six months of age and can be fatal. For more information on the health effects of [nitrate](#), [arsenic](#), [lead](#), and [pesticides](#), see the [wellcare® information sheets on these topics](#).

How to Disinfect Your Water by Boiling

- Step 1** Filter the water through clean cloths, if it is cloudy, and allow it to settle.
- Step 2** Bring the water to a full boil in a metal or glass container.
- Step 3** Boil the water vigorously (at or near 212° F (100° C)) for one full minute. At higher altitudes, water reaches its boiling point at a lower temperature. Therefore, you should increase the boiling time to three minutes if you live in an altitude greater than one mile above sea level.
- Step 4** Keep the water covered while it cools.
- Step 5** Store water in a cool place, tightly covered and in a clean container.
- Step 6** To improve the taste of boiled or stored water, you may add a pinch of salt per quart/liter of water boiled or add oxygen back to the water by pouring it back and forth between two containers.

When Boiling Your Drinking Water is *NOT* Recommended

You should *NOT* boil water if any of the following are present:

- toxic metals, such as lead
- chemicals, such as pesticides or solvents
- Nitrate
- Arsenic

Boiling the water will not remove these substances and, in fact, boiling water concentrates the levels of these contaminants, due to evaporation that occurs during boiling. Distillation and other treatment devices will remove metals, chemicals, nitrate, and arsenic from water. During distillation, the water is boiled for 20 minutes, and only the condensed vapor is used.

For More Information on What You Need to Know if You Are Told to Boil Your Drinking Water

Contact your licensed well contractor, local health department, state environmental agency, or the wellcare® Hotline.



Information to help maintain and protect your water well system:

wellcare® is a program of the Water Systems Council (WSC). WSC is the only national organization solely focused on protecting the health and water supply of an estimated 23 million households nationwide who depend on private wells (according to the U.S. EPA).

This publication is one of more than 100 wellcare® information sheets available FREE at www.watersystemscouncil.org.

Well owners and others with questions about wells and well water can contact the wellcare® Hotline at 1-888-395-1033 or visit www.wellcarehotline.org to fill out a contact form or chat with us live!

JOIN THE WELLCARE® WELL OWNERS NETWORK!

By joining the FREE wellcare® Well Owners Network, you will receive regular information on how to maintain your well and protect your well water.

Contact us at 1-888-395-1033 or visit www.wellcarehotline.org to join!