

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BOIL WATER NOTICES

## What is a boil water notice?

A boil water notice is a precautionary notice used to safeguard health when the water supply may have been compromised. You may be asked to boil your water during an emergency or operational failure:

- if tests show that harmful micro-organisms could be present in the water
- if the water pressure drops due to equipment failure or power outages
- because of a break or repairs on a water main
- if the water source has been flooded or there is a significant inflow of stormwater
- at times of high turbidity in the source water (dirty water)
- during situations that warrant special action to protect consumers health.

A boil water notice does not necessarily mean that tap water will make everyone seriously ill, but it does mean the water does not meet the New Zealand Drinking Water Quality Assurance Standards. It is likely that there are harmful micro-organisms (pathogens) in the water and we need to be especially careful with infants, the elderly, and people with immunocompromised conditions.

## How does boiling make my water safe?

Boiling the water kills micro-organisms such as bacteria, viruses or protozoa that can cause disease. Boiling makes the tap water microbiologically safer.

## How long should I boil the water?

Bring tap water to a full rolling boil, let it boil for at least TWO MINUTES and let it cool before using. If using for a hot drink it may be used immediately after boiling. Electric jugs with a cut-off switch can be used as long as they are full – allow the water to come to the boil and automatically switch off. Do not hold the switch down to increase the boiling time. Boiled water should be covered and allowed to cool in the same container.

If boiling water on your stove use manageable sized containers and don't overfill them. Place container on a rear element if there are small children in the house. Let water cool before pouring it to another container.

## Can I boil water in the microwave?

Tap water can be boiled in the microwave using a microwave-safe container. Water should reach a full rolling boil for TWO MINUTES. Place a microwave-safe utensil in the container to stop the water superheating (heating above boiling point without steam or bubbles).

## Do I have to boil the tap water used to make beverages?

Yes. Boil all the tap water you use for making coffee, tea, mixed drinks or any beverage made with water. All tap water used for making ice must also be boiled.

## Should I boil tap water used to make baby formula?

Yes. Use only bottled or cooled, boiled tap water for mixing formula for your baby. Wash and sterilise bottles and teats by boiling or microwaving. If breastfeeding, continue as usual.

## Do I need to boil water before using it to wash vegetables that will be eaten raw?

Yes. Boil all tap water for washing raw vegetables.

## Should I boil the tap water used in cooking?

All tap water used in cooking must first be boiled for TWO MINUTES **unless** the cooking process involves boiling for TWO MINUTES or more.

## Do I need to use boiled water for washing clothes or flushing the toilet?

No.

## Should I boil tap water for brushing my teeth?

Yes. Any tap water that might be swallowed should be boiled before use.

## Do I have to boil my dish-washing water?

Dishes can be washed using boiled water. If using tap water, dishes washed with water and detergent should be rinsed in a bleach solution. (1 tablespoon unscented household bleach per 5 litres of water). Allow dishes to completely air dry.

You can wash dishes in an electric dishwasher but be sure to use the hot setting (70°C or hotter) or the sanitisation function. If your dishwasher does not have these functions, dishes should be rinsed in a bleach solution. (1 tablespoon unscented household bleach per 5 litres of water). Allow dishes to completely air dry.

## Do I need to boil water for hand washing?

You should either:

- Use bottled or boiled water for handwashing
  - No special soaps are necessary.
- Use soap and tap water followed by an additional hand disinfection, by either:
  - Rinsing hands in disinfectant solution (add 1 teaspoon plain household bleach to 10 litres of water)
  - Using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser

Wet wipes used for cleaning babies are not effective for disinfecting hands.

## What about my bath water?

There is no need to boil water for bathing or showering. You should avoid swallowing water or getting water in the mouth (avoid the face). Infants and toddlers should be sponge bathed. No special soaps are necessary.

Care should be taken to prevent water from getting into deep open or post-surgical wounds. Consult your doctor or health provider for wound care instructions.

## Do I still have to boil tap water if I have a water treatment device?

Yes. Devices designed to improve the taste, odour, or chemical quality of the water, such as activated carbon filters, will not remove harmful micro-organisms from the tap water. Boil the tap water to make sure it is safe.

## Can I use bottled water instead of boiling tap water?

Yes. Bottled water can be used for all situations where boiled tap water is recommended in this pamphlet. Be sure that the bottled water is from a reliable source.

## What should I do if I become sick?

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants. People with weakened immune systems such as people undergoing chemotherapy, organ transplant patients, those with immune system disorders, the elderly and infants can be at greater risk from infections. If you fit any of these categories, please seek advice from your health care provider.

## How will I know if a boil water notice is in place?

- Regular broadcasts will be made on your local radio station
- Signs are placed in public places
- Ads are placed in your local newspaper
- Notifications appears on Council's website at [www.tcdc.govt.nz](http://www.tcdc.govt.nz)
- You can be notified by e-mail. Interested? Send an email with your details to [customer.services@tcdc.govt.nz](mailto:customer.services@tcdc.govt.nz)

## What should I do if a Boil Water Notice is in place?

- Water needs to be boiled even if you can smell or taste chlorine. Bringing water to the boil will kill bugs.
- Boil all water for consumption for TWO MINUTES
- Turn your ice maker off and use boiled water in coffee machines
- Use bottled water or mouthwash to brush teeth
- Use bottled or boiled water for baby formula.

## How will I know when it is safe to drink the water?

- You can be notified by e-mail. Interested? Send an email with your details to [customer.services@tcdc.govt.nz](mailto:customer.services@tcdc.govt.nz)
- The signs are removed
- Radio ads will cease
- Notification is removed from TCDC website

## Are any other provisions made?

A water tanker water may be located in your area. This is a free service. This is clean safe water and does not need to be boiled. Bring a clean sealed container to collect water as and when needed. If you have doubts about the cleanliness of your container you must still boil the water you receive from the tanker in your area.



## Can my pets or livestock drink the water?

Pets and livestock can usually drink untreated water, however you may like to care for your pets the way you care for yourself and give them bottled or boiled water. If you have concerns due to vomiting or diarrhoea, seek medical advice from a veterinarian.

In an emergency boiling is the preferred method to make sure tap water is safe to drink.

If you cannot boil your tap water:

1. Use bottled water
2. Treat tap water by adding 1 teaspoon of household bleach per 10 litres of water and leave for 30 minutes
3. Water purification tablets may also be used to disinfect tap water by following the manufacturer's instructions.

Want more information?

- Please listen to your local radio,

- Check our website



[www.tcdc.govt.nz](http://www.tcdc.govt.nz)

- Check our Facebook page



[www.facebook.com/Thames-CoromandelDistrictCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/Thames-CoromandelDistrictCouncil)

- Or call



07 868 0200

If you have health related questions, phone the Healthline on 0800 611 116

Further information on NZ drinking water standards, water use and sustainability can be found on the following sites.

<https://www.taumataarowai.govt.nz/>

<https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/>

[www.branz.co.nz](http://www.branz.co.nz)

[www.waternz.org.nz](http://www.waternz.org.nz)

[www.mfe.govt.nz](http://www.mfe.govt.nz)