**Frequently Asked Questions About Do Not Drink Water Advisories**

***Note: A number of questions likely to arise in this type of contamination incident, such as the ability to use the water for things like handwashing and showering, will depend on the specific nature of the contaminant in question. Once the water utility has identified the contaminant, it will be able to better tailor its responses to these types of questions.***

**PURPOSE**

This list includes questions most often asked during a “Do Not Drink” water advisory. The content was adapted to help water systems provide customers with clear and concise information and actions to take.

Water systems are encouraged to use this information as a guide to help create their own fact sheets and other communication materials. Recommendations may vary depending on the circumstances and the severity of water contamination. Select specific questions that are appropriate for each advisory situation.

This information is for Tier 1 Public Notices. For a waterborne disease outbreak, consult with local and state public health authorities to adapt the information.

**DIRECTIONS**

* Brackets [ ] indicate places to insert specific information, such as the water system name, health department information, or the contaminant.
* Limit fact sheets for customers to one page front and back.
* Refer to the fact sheets from the “Tools and Templates” in Section 1 and Section 2 of this toolbox for additional topics.

Use the Q&As to develop scripts or fact sheets for water system staff, especially customer service and field crews. Uses include:

* Briefing materials for public health departments and other partners
* Media kits and updates
* Customer fact sheets
* Websites and online tools

##### Drinking Water

###### Can I boil my water to make it safe to drink?

No. Because of the nature of the water contamination, boiling your water will not make it safe to drink. Use only bottled water for drinking.

###### Can I disinfect my water to make it safe to drink?

No. Because of the nature of the water contamination, disinfecting your water will not make it safe to drink. Use only bottled water for drinking.

###### Should I use bottled water?

Yes. Bottled water is the only water that is safe to drink at this time until further notice. Bottled water is available at [insert locations here].

##### Food and Beverages

###### Can I use my coffee maker, ice machine, water dispenser, or soda dispenser?

No. Do not use water from any appliance connected to your water lines. This includes the water and ice dispensers in your refrigerator/freezer and dishwasher. If your appliance is not connected to your water line (e.g., a free standing coffee maker), you can use it, but use bottled water in place of tap water.

When the advisory is lifted, consult the owner’s manual to find out how to flush and sanitize appliances.

###### Can I use ice from my refrigerator/freezer?

No.

* Do not use ice from ice trays, ice dispensers, or ice makers.
* Throw out all ice made with tap water.

###### Can I use tap water to cook food (such as pasta, rice, noodles, etc.)?

No. Until you receive updated instruction from local officials, bottled water should be used for food preparation.

###### What should I do about preparing food and beverages? How should I wash fruit, vegetables, and food preparation surfaces?

* Wash fruits and vegetables with bottled water.
* Prepare drinks, such as coffee, tea, and lemonade with bottled water.
* Wash food preparation surfaces with bottled water.

###### What should I do about feeding my baby?

Breastfeeding is best. Continue to breastfeed. If breastfeeding is not an option:

* Use ready-to-use baby formula, if possible.
* Prepare powdered or concentrated baby formula with bottled water.
* Wash and sterilize bottles and nipples with bottled water before use.
* If you cannot sterilize bottles, try to use single-serve, ready-to-feed bottles.

###### How do I wash dishes?

Use disposable plates, cups, and utensils, if possible. If you do not have disposable dishes, wash dishes by hand and use only bottled water and dish soap.

##### Health

###### What should I do if already drank the water?

If you are concerned about your health or the health of a family member, contact your healthcare provider or [local health department].

##### Household Information

###### Should I give my pets bottled water?

Pets can get some of the same diseases as people, so it is a good idea to give them bottled water, as well.

###### Do I need to worry about my fish or aquatic pets (e.g., reptiles, frogs)?

Contact your local pet store or veterinarian for more advice.

###### Is it safe to water my garden and house plants?

Follow the guidance of your local health authorities for advice on using tap water for household plants and gardens.

###### Is it safe to let my children play in a kiddie pool filled with tap water?

No. Due to the high chance that children will get water in their mouth while playing in a kiddie pool, we recommend that you avoid using your kiddie pool during the advisory.

##### Hygiene

###### Can I use tap water to wash my hands?

Follow the guidance of your local health authorities or water utility for advice on using tap water to wash hands.

###### Can I use tap water to brush my teeth?

No. Use bottled water to brush your teeth.

###### Is it safe to take a shower or bath?

Follow the guidance of your local health authorities or water utility for advice on using tap water for showering and bathing.

###### What about doing laundry?

Follow the guidance of your local health authorities or water utility for advice on doing laundry.

###### For more information, see or contact:

* Water system: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]
* State or local public health department: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]
* Primacy Agency: [name, title, phone, e-mail, website]
* EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791
* [**Ground Water and Drinking Water**](https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water): EPA provides information and guidance about drinking water quality, emergencies, contaminants, public health issues, and treatment and storage.