

EMERGENCY DISINFECTION OF DRINKING WATER

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Section

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There are two general methods to disinfect small quantities of water. One method is boiling. It is the most positive method by which water can be made bacterially safe to drink. Another method is chemical treatment. If applied with care, chlorine bleach will make most waters free of harmful or pathogenic organisms.

WATER TO BE USED FOR DRINKING,
COOKING, MAKING ANY PREPARED DRINK,
OR BRUSHING TEETH SHOULD BE
PROPERLY DISINFECTED

Safe drinking water includes bottled, boiled or treated water. Here are some general rules concerning water for drinking and cooking. Remember:

- Do not use non-potable water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, prepare food, or make ice.
- If you use bottled water, know where it came from. Otherwise, water should be boiled or treated before use. Drink only bottled, boiled, or treated water until your supply is tested and found safe.
- When using garden hoses to transfer water from a neighboring private well the water should be considered non-potable and be properly disinfected, using the established guidelines listed below. It is also recommended that food grade hoses be used when possible to avoid potential organic contaminants leaching from the non-food grade hoses if consumption of the water is intended.
- Containers for water should be rinsed with a bleach solution before reusing them. Use water storage tanks and other types of containers with caution. For example, fire truck storage tanks, as well as previously used cans or bottles may be contaminated with microbes or chemicals. Do not rely on unproven methods or devices for decontaminating water.

Methods of Emergency Disinfection

Boiling: Vigorous boiling for one minute will kill any disease-causing microorganisms present in the water. The flat taste of boiled water can be improved by pouring it back and forth from one container into another (called aeration), or by allowing it to stand for a few hours.

Chlorine Bleach: When boiling is not practical, chemical disinfection should be used. The most commonly used chemical is chlorine. Common household bleach contains a chlorine compound that will disinfect water. The procedure to be followed is usually written on the label. When the necessary procedure is not given, one should find the percentage of available chlorine on the label and use the information in the following table as a guide.

Use only a liquid sodium hypochlorite solution such as common household bleach or pool chlorine. **Do NOT use scented bleach or stabilized pool chlorine tablets.** Also, be aware that pool chlorine solutions have a limited shelf life. If your pool chlorine is more than 2 weeks old, assume that it is no longer effective.

| Available Chlorine ¹ | Drops per quart of clear water ² |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1% | 10 |
| 4-6% (Household Bleach) | 2 |
| 7-10% (Pool Chlorine) | 1 |

¹ If strength is unknown, add 10 drops per quart of water

² Double the amount for cloudy or colored water

The treated water should be mixed thoroughly and allowed to stand for 30 minutes. The water should have a slight chlorine odor; if not, repeat the dosage and allow the water to stand for an additional 15 minutes. If the treated water has too strong a chlorine taste, it can be made more pleasing by allowing the water to stand exposed to the air for a few hours or by pouring it from one clean container into another several times.



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