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3 **BOIL WATER EVENTS**
4 **Frequently Asked Questions from Residents and Homeowners**
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6 **Q1 - Can I use my water for cooking?**
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8 Any water used for food preparation or cooking should be boiled first or be from an acceptable
9 alternate source. Bring the water to a full rolling boil for at least one minute before adding the
10 food item, like when you make pasta. If the water will be at a slight boil for a long time, like when
11 cooking beans or boiling chicken for 10 - 20 minutes, then this will also be protective.
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13 **Q2 - How should I wash fruit and vegetables and make ice?**
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15 Fruits, vegetables, and any other foods that will not be cooked should only be washed and rinsed
16 with water that has been boiled or water from an acceptable alternate source. Similarly, ice should
17 only be made with either boiled water or water from an acceptable alternate source.
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19 **Q3 - Can I use my water for making baby formula or drinks?**
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21 No, not without precautions! Any water used for baby food, formula, or making beverages must
22 be boiled (**and then cooled!**) or be from an acceptable alternate source.
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24 **Q4 - Is potentially contaminated water safe for washing dishes?**
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26 Hand-washed dishes: Yes, if rinsed for a minute in a dilute bleach rinse (1 tablespoon per gallon
27 of water). Allow dishes, cutlery, cups, etc. to completely air dry before use.
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29 Home dishwasher: Yes, if the hot wash is at least 170° F and includes a full dry cycle. However,
30 most home dishwashers do not reach this temperature. If you are uncertain of the temperature of
31 your dishwasher, rinse in dilute bleach and air dry as described above for hand washed dishes.
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33 **Q5 - Is potentially contaminated water safe for washing clothes?**
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35 Yes, it is usually safe to wash clothes as long as they are completely dried before being worn.
36 However, increased turbidity may occur during a boil water event which may discolor your clothing.
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38 **Q6 - Is potentially contaminated water safe for bathing and shaving?**
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40 The water may be used by healthy individuals for showering and bathing, so long as they do not
41 swallow the water. Individuals wishing to shave or with open wounds, cuts, blisters or recent
42 surgical wounds; and people who are immunocompromised or suffer from chronic illness should
43 use boiled water (then cooled) or water from an acceptable alternate source. Children and disabled
44 individuals should have their bathing supervised to ensure water is not ingested. Sponge bathing is
45 advisable, and the bathing time should be minimized to further reduce the potential for ingestion.
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47 **Q7 - Can I brush my teeth with the water without boiling it?**
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49 No! Any water you ingest or place in your mouth should be disinfected by having been boiled
50 (and then cooled) or be from an acceptable alternate source.
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1 **Q8 - How should I wash my hands during a boil water notice/order?**

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3 Generally, vigorous washing with soap and your tap water is safe for basic personal hygiene. If
4 you are washing your hands in association with food preparation, you should use boiled (then
5 cooled) water, bottled water, or water from another acceptable source.

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7 **Q9 - Can I use hand sanitizing lotion or wipes?**

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9 Hand sanitizing wipes should not be relied on alone, especially to clean your hands for making
10 food. Alcohol based sanitizers work against some common germs (like E. coli, and salmonella)
11 but may not be effective for cryptosporidium and bacterium spores.

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13 **Q10 - What infectious organisms might be present in contaminated water?**

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15 Organisms of concern in New York State include: protozoa like Giardia and Cryptosporidium;
16 bacteria such as Shigella and E. coli; and viruses. These organisms can affect the gastrointestinal
17 system, causing with or without fever: diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, and vomiting. Most of
18 these illnesses are not usually serious or life threatening except in the elderly, the very young or
19 people who are immunocompromised. Skin contact can also lead to infection.

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21 **Q11 - What if I have already consumed potentially contaminated water?**

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23 Illness is possible, especially for people that already have a chronic illness or may be
24 immunocompromised. This is why boil water notices are issued. Anyone experiencing symptoms
25 of gastroenteritis, such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and abdominal cramps should seek medical
26 attention. These symptoms (with or without fever) are not unique to exposure to contaminated
27 water and a doctor's involvement and medical testing are key components to identifying the cause
28 of illness.

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30 **Q12 - What should homeowners do when the boil water order/notice is lifted?**

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- 32 • Flush household pipes/faucets first: To flush your plumbing, run all your cold water
33 faucets on full for at least 5 minutes each. If your service connection is long or complex
34 (like in an apartment building) consider flushing for a longer period. Your building
35 superintendent or landlord should be able to advise you on longer flushing times.
 - 36 • Automatic ice makers: Dump existing ice and flush by making and discarding three
37 batches of ice cubes. Wipe down the ice bin with a disinfectant. If your water feed line to
38 the machine is longer than 20 feet, increase to 5 batches.
 - 39 • Hot water heaters, water coolers, in line filters, and other appliances with direct water
40 connections or water tanks: Run enough water to completely replace at least one full
41 volume of all lines and tanks. If your filters are near the end of their life, replace them.
 - 42 • Water softeners: Run through a regeneration cycle.
 - 43 • Reverse Osmosis (RO) units: Replace pre filters, and check owner's manual.
 - 44 • Replace other water filters, as they are disposable and may be contaminated. Especially
45 carbon filters and others that are near the end of their life.
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47 More detailed information can be found in other fact sheets for certain consumers, such as for all
48 consumers or food service establishments, which are available from the New York State
49 Department of Health or from your local health department.