



Receiving a Boil Water Notice

What should I do if I am instructed to boil my tap water?

Heating water is one of the best ways to kill or inactivate bacteria or viruses. Most bacteria and viruses are killed at temperatures well below 100 degrees Celsius. To be safe, bring water to the boil and keep it on a rolling boil for 2 minutes. Any bacteria or viruses that were in your water are killed or deactivated, making the water safe to drink.

If you receive a notice to boil your water before drinking, it means that the water in your tap might contain bacteria or viruses which could be harmful to your health. You should boil it before you drink it, use it to brush your teeth, make ice cubes, prepare food, clean feeding equipment or give it to your pets.

The water is still safe to shower and bathe in, but make sure it does not get into your mouth. It is also safe to wash dishes, if you use hot water and dry the dishes thoroughly before use. You can continue to wash clothes and flush the toilet as normal.

Very occasionally, you may receive instructions to cease using your water altogether. This may be due to an unexpected contamination of your water source. In this case, drink bottled water or an alternative supply provided by your water company or water provider.

Why am I being instructed to boil water?

Tap water in the UK is safe to drink without boiling. Before water reaches your tap, it undergoes a series of processes, which effectively kill or inactivate bacteria and viruses. These processes and the water are being continuously monitored and tested by your water company.

On rare occasions, the systems can fail. Usually, this will be due to weather emergencies or engineering works. The water company will issue a notice to the consumers in the affected area, instructing them to boil their water before drinking.

If you receive water from a private water supply, this notice will come from your local authority.

Further Information

The Drinking Water Inspectorate is the independent regulator of drinking water quality for public water supplies in England and Wales. Visit www.dwi.gov.uk. Contact us at dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk or telephone 0300 068 6400.