

# Boil water alerts FAQs

## What is a boil water alert?

We will issue a boil water alert when water quality testing indicates potential contamination of the drinking water supply by a pathogen such as cryptosporidium, giardia or pathogenic bacteria. These pathogens can't survive high temperatures.

Everyone in the potentially contaminated supply should boil their household water before use to make it safe. The boil water alert will remain in place until water quality results from the laboratory are back to normal.

## How long should I boil the water?

NSW Health recommends bringing the water to a rolling boil, such as with an automatic kettle, allowing it to cool and storing it in a clean container with a lid in the fridge.

## What should I use boiled water for?

Any water that may be consumed by a person or pet should be boiled before use. This includes water used for: drinking (including water used for making infants formula, coffee, cordial or other beverages), cooking, washing uncooked foods (such as seafood or salads), making ice, pet's drinking water, washing hands, cleaning teeth and gargling.

For children, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems, extra care can be taken by boiling water used for face washing, washing toys, and cleaning utensils.

## How should I wash my hands during a boil water alert?

Vigorous handwashing with soap and your tap water is safe for basic personal hygiene. However, if you are washing your hands to prepare food, you should use soap and boiled (then cooled) water or bottled water.

## Do we have to boil water we won't consume?

No. Dishes should be washed in hot soapy water or in a dishwasher if your dishwasher has a hot setting. Dishes should be allowed to thoroughly air dry. Water can be used for bathing and showering if care is taken not to get any in your eyes, nose or mouth, or on any unhealed wounds. Water can be used for washing clothes. Water can be used for outdoor purposes such as watering the garden or cleaning vehicles.

## Can I top up my swimming pool during a boil water alert?

No, it is not advised to fill or top up your pool or spa during a boil water alert. NSW Health has particular instructions [here](#).

## My home has a town water top up rainwater tank. Will it be okay?

Tanks with town water top up are generally not connected to taps you would use for drinking water. However, if in doubt, see the NSW Health instructions for disinfecting your tank [here](#).

**What about schools and childcare centres?**

Schools and childcare centres will be notified, and where practical, bottled water will be supplied. However, children should take boiled or bottled water with them to school as well.

NSW Health has information for schools [here](#).

**Will cafes and restaurants be affected?**

Establishments will be able to operate as long as they can meet food safety requirements. NSW Health has specific information [here](#).

**I drank some water before I knew about the boil water alert. Will I be okay?**

There is a small chance that drinking contaminated water will make you ill. If you have any symptoms, go and see your doctor.

**How will I know when my water is safe to drink again?**

Regular updates will be posted on our website home page and we will inform the local media.

**Where can I go for more information?**

Contact MidCoast Council on 1300 133 455.