

Drinking water precautions during and after flooding

Interior Health is advising people who use private water systems that there may be an elevated risk to their drinking water during and after floods. Those who get their drinking water from a public water supply system should pay attention to notices and updates from their water supplier. If you are unsure of the safety of your water or uncertain about how it is impacted, then you should use an alternate source that is not affected by floods, such as bottled water.

Individuals with compromised immune systems and chronic illnesses, infants, and older adults are at higher risk when the drinking water is affected. Floods may significantly increase risk to your health by introducing raw sewage, chemical contaminants, and debris into water sources.

It is important to remember the following when your drinking water is affected by floods:

- Do not drink or use any water that has been contaminated with flood waters. Do not swallow water while you are showering or bathing. Your drinking water sources may need to be treated and tested before consumption can resume.
- For cleaning of your dishes, rinse them for a minute in diluted bleach (one tablespoon of household bleach per gallon of tap water) after washing. If you are using a dishwasher, use the hot wash and dry cycle.
- Many disease causing microbial agents, such as *E. coli* may be present in water impacted by flooding. Wash your hands with soap after contact with flood waters or handling items that have come into contact with flood waters.

If you are using a Public Water Supply System

- Contact your supplier for information and pay attention to information shared by your local media such as community bulletins, newspapers, and local radio stations.
- You can also visit your Regional District website to see if your drinking water is impacted by the flood.
- Your water supplier may issue a Boil Water Notice or Do Not Consume advisory based on the health risks.

A current list of water advisories and notices is available at:

www.drinkingwaterforeveryone.ca/.

(Open in Google Chrome, Safari, or Firefox.)

If you are using a Private Water system

- Do not drink or use water that has been impacted by floods.
- Your drinking water source needs to be tested and may require treatment before consumption can resume.
- Even if you are not feeling sick, your water may be unsafe.
- Some contaminants found in impacted water cannot be seen, tasted or smelled, but can be harmful to your health.

For information on testing your water, refer to [Well Water Testing](#) (this information is also applicable to surface water sources).

For information on disinfecting your water system, refer to [Disinfecting Drinking Water](#)

For more flood information, please visit the [Interior Health website](#) or contact your nearest [Environmental Public Health office](#).