



Portland Water District
FROM SEBAGO LAKE TO CASCO BAY

Drinking Water Contaminated with Bacteria

If recent tests have indicated the possible presence of bacteria in your drinking water, follow the precautions below:

Drinking the Water

There are two simple and effective methods you can use to treat drinking water for microbiological contaminants (bacteria):

1. Boil: Bring the water to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute. Laboratory data show this is adequate to make the water safe for drinking.

or

2. Disinfect: Disinfectant tablets obtained from a wilderness store or pharmacy may be used. In an emergency, liquid chlorine bleach such as Clorox[®] or Purex[®] can be used at a dose of 8 drops (or 1 teaspoon) of bleach to each gallon of water. (*Careful measurement with a clean dropper or other accurate measuring device is required when using liquid chlorine bleach.*) Let stand for at least 30 minutes before use. Read the label to see that the bleach has 5-6% available chlorine.

Washing Dishes

It is best to use disposable tableware during the time the water needs disinfection. If that is not possible, the following steps should be taken:

Wash dishes normally but be sure to rinse them in a solution of 1 teaspoon of bleach in a gallon of warm water (submersion in a dishpan for a minimum of 5 minutes is advised). The dishes should be allowed to air dry. Gloves should be worn when handling bleach to minimize any skin irritation. It is recommended that you use the additional rinse step, as described above, after washing.

Brushing your teeth: Only disinfected *or* boiled water should be used for brushing your teeth.

Bathing: Young children should be given sponge baths rather than put in a bathtub where they might ingest tap water. Adults or children should take care not to swallow water when showering.

Ice: Ice cubes are not safe unless made with disinfected *or* boiled water. The freezing process does not kill the bacteria or other microorganisms.

Washing fruit/vegetables: Use disinfected *or* boiled water to wash fruits/vegetables that are eaten raw.

Hand washing: Only boiled *or* disinfected water should be used for hand washing.

Cooking: Bring water to a rolling boil for 1 minute before adding food.

Infants: For infants use only prepared canned baby formula that is not condensed and does not require added water. *Do not* use powdered formulas prepared with contaminated water.

Houseplants and garden: Water can be used without treatment for watering household plants and garden plants. The exception would be things like strawberries or tomatoes where the water would contact the edible fruit.

House pets: The same precautions that are taken to protect humans should be applied to pets. Aquatic organisms (e.g. fish) should not be exposed to water containing elevated levels of bacteria. If the organism's water needs to be refreshed use appropriately boiled or bottled water.

