

Drinking water supplies following a flood event

It's important that water used for drinking, the preparation of food or drinks (including baby formula), brushing teeth, or washing dishes and utensils is safe and free from contamination that could cause illness.

DO NOT drink or use:

- Water contaminated with chemicals or fuel.
- Water contaminated with floodwater or silt.

If you have no access to safe drinking water during a state of emergency, contact your local council's civil defence group. They will arrange access to a safe supply of drinking water.

If you are unsure about the safety of your drinking water use bottled water.

Flooding and silt can affect the safety of drinking water

This can be due to changes in the water supply, contamination of stored water, damage to pipes, tanks, pumps, etc or through loss of power supply.

Floodwater and silt can be contaminated with farm run-off, chemicals, and sewage. If this gets into drinking water supplies it can make you sick.

Contaminated drinking water supplies may have harmful microorganisms (bugs or germs) which can cause illness such as diarrhoea and vomiting. Infants, children, older people, and people with low immunity are particularly vulnerable to these illnesses.

These microorganisms can be hard to treat. For example, while chlorine will kill bacteria, protozoa are resistant to chlorine. That's why many water treatment plants use a multi-barrier approach to their treatment process to make sure that all microorganisms are killed.

For bottle-fed infants or people who are immuno-compromised, you need to be extra careful to ensure the water is safe to drink.

You should take extra steps to ensure your drinking water is safe

1. Check with your local council or water supplier to see if any consumer advisories have been issued (like a boil water notice) before drinking or using water from the tap.
2. If you don't know where your drinking water comes from or if it's safe to drink, don't drink it. **Use bottled water if it's available.**
3. Water contaminated with floodwater or silt should never be used.
4. While boiling water can kill microorganisms (bugs and germs) it will not remove any chemical contamination.

Your drinking water supplier will let you know what you need to do to protect public health – this might include one of the following consumer advisories: **Boil Water / Do Not Drink / Do Not Use.**

Emergency treatment examples and effectiveness against contaminants

	Bacteria	Protozoa	Chemical
Chlorine / Bleach	✓ Treated	✗ Not treated	✗ Not treated
Boil	✓ Treated	✓ Treated	✗ Not treated

Boiling water is the best way to kill microorganisms (bugs and germs)



To treat water by boiling:

1. Bring water to a rolling boil in a pot or use an electric jug (until it automatically shuts off). Once the water has boiled (let it cool), it is safe to drink.
2. Once cooled – store boiled water in a clean container with a lid.
3. Boiled water is best used within 24 hours.

If you can't boil your water, use unscented bleach



If you cannot boil water, you can use unscented bleach (chlorine) to treat your water. However, while chlorine will kill bacteria, protozoa are resistant to chlorine.

To disinfect water with bleach:

- Add 5 drops of plain unscented bleach to 1 litre of water, or 1/2 teaspoon of bleach to 10 litres of water.
- Stir the water well, and let it stand for 30 minutes before using it. The time delay is important, as it gives the bleach a chance to deal with any microorganisms in the water.

Don't drink water that has algae growing in it.

Don't use bleaches that contain detergents/surfactants (i.e. foam up when shaken), fragrances (e.g. lemon-scented) or are gel. Ideally use liquid bleach which contains 5-6% sodium hypochlorite.

