

Ensuring safe drinking water

Having access to adequate supplies of safe drinking water during and immediately after a disaster is one of the most important parts of protecting your health. However, drinking water supplied by your local government or your water utility may not be available or safe to drink after a disaster. As a result, you should include adequate supplies of safe drinking water in your emergency kit. For more information on 'Preparing your Household Emergency Kit' visit <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/healthieryou/disaster/>. If you haven't prepared adequate supplies of safe drinking water, the following information can help you treat water to ensure its safety.



During and immediately following a disaster

Local governments and water utilities have an obligation to alert the public if they know or suspect the safety of the water has been compromised as a result of a disaster. Listen to your local radio and TV station or check your local council's website (if possible) for updates on the water supply. It is important that any advice provided through these channels is followed.

Make water safe

If your local council or water utility knows or suspects drinking the water might make you sick because of disease-causing microbes they will advise you to boil the water before consumption. Water should be brought to the boil and then allowed to cool in clean, covered containers before use. Boiled water can scald so it is safer to use a kettle rather than pots and pans. If you have no electricity and have to use pots, always take care with young children and vulnerable people. Keep pan handles turned inward so children cannot reach them. The use of bottled water is another safe alternative and is safer to handle than hot water. Use cooled, boiled water or bottled water for:

- drinking
- preparing food
- bathing infants
- preparing baby formula
- and cooking
- making ice
- brushing teeth
- hand washing

Dirty dishes should be washed in hot soapy water, rinsed in hot water and left to completely air-dry before using again. You don't need boiled water for toilet flushing and clothes washing.

Note: water contaminated by chemicals (including fuels) will not be made safe by boiling. Use a different source of water if you know or suspect that water might be contaminated with chemicals.

For more information:

- view this fact sheet online at www.health.qld.gov.au/healthieryou/disaster
- visit Emergency Management Queensland at www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq/css/beprepared.asp

For further information, contact your nearest Queensland Health public health unit:

Brisbane North Tel: 3624 1111
Brisbane South Tel: 3000 9148
Bundaberg Tel: 4150 2780
Cairns Tel: 4226 5555
Central Queensland Tel: 4920 6989
Central West Tel: 4652 6000

Darling Downs Tel: 4631 9888
Gold Coast Tel: 5668 3700
Hervey Bay Tel: 4184 1800
Logan Tel: 3412 2989
Mackay Tel: 4911 0400
Moreton Bay Tel: 3142 1800

Mount Isa and Gulf Tel: 4744 9100
South West Tel: 4656 8100
Sunshine Coast Tel: 5409 6600
Townsville Tel: 4753 9000
West Moreton Tel: 3413 1200