

F a c t s

GUIDELINES FOR DENTAL OFFICES FOR BWO

Note: These guidelines have been designed for generic use during a boil water order. Health units are advised to modify this document to reflect the particular circumstances of a boil water order event.

During a boil water order

- During a boil water order, untreated tap water is unsafe for drinking, for making ice, for use during dental procedures, and for brushing teeth, gargling, and rinsing dentures.
- Bring untreated tap water to a rolling boil for one minute to make it safe for all uses. Or use commercially bottled water. Sterile saline and distilled water are also safe for dental and disinfection procedures.
- If you make ice in-house, ensure that it's made from a safe water source. If you're unsure if the ice in your office was made before problems began with the drinking-water system, discard the ice and disinfect the ice cube tray (note: this can also be used to disinfect dishes and other tableware):

Guidelines for disinfecting ice cubes trays, dishes, and tableware during a boil water order

1. Wash in warm soapy untreated tap water;
2. Rinse under untreated tap water; and,
3. Disinfect in a bleach-in-water solution. Place 10 ml (2 teaspoons) household bleach in 4.5 litres (one gallon) of water, mix, and let stand for at least 10 minutes prior to use. Immerse ice cube tray or other utensils in solution for about one minute.

Refill ice cube tray with boiled water or commercially bottled water.

— *Health & Environment Facts* —

Before treatment

- To avoid contaminating dental equipment, turn off the water supply to drinking water fountains and dental units such as triplex syringes, water dispensers, and ultrasonic scalers.
- If it is not possible to turn off the water supply to these water-using units, cover or tape the taps or outlets on this equipment. Post a notice beside sinks advising *Do not drink the water, use the water to make ice, or use the water for dental hygiene without boiling first.*
- Explain to all patients the impact the boil water order has on dental care. Consider postponing elective restorative and surgical procedures until more favorable conditions exist.
- Indicate what your office is doing (see below) to ensure your patient's safety.

Hand washing guidelines during a boil water order

Wash your hands as you normally do: under warm running water and soap. If the boil water order has been issued because of a waterborne outbreak of illness, wash hands under warm running water and soap. Then:

1. Use alcohol-based hand disinfectants containing more than 60% alcohol. These products are widely used in health care settings after washing hands or in situations when water is not available.

During treatment

- Run slow-speed turbines dry as per usual practice.
- Avoid dry cutting when removing old amalgam restorations (see Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario, Dispatch, 1998 (April):19).
- Run the high-speed turbines dry, but use a hand syringe of boiled water or sterile saline to cool and rinse the tooth and/or oral tissues. Use copious quantities of safe water to irrigate the mouth, prevent overheating of the (tooth) pulp, and reduce the amount of mercury vapour (when cutting amalgam).
- Continue regular hand piece maintenance (i.e., oiling and sterilizing) as per the manufacturer's instructions. Use distilled water only to sterilize.
- Scale by hand, using hand scalers. Never use ultrasonic scalers (e.g., cavitrons) or air polishers because they require a lot of water and cannot be modified for use during boil water order.
- Handle x-rays with gloves and discard the gloves after handling the film. X-ray processors are commonly connected to the untreated water supply. For manual x-ray processors, use distilled water during the boil water order.

— Health & Environment Facts —

After treatment

- Remind patients to use only boiled or commercially bottled water for dental hygiene at home during the boil water order.

After the boil water order has been rescinded/lifted

- Disconnect, clean, and disinfect the x-ray processor. Contact the manufacturer for advice regarding appropriate disinfection measures.
- Consult your facilities engineer, the equipment manufacturer, or refer to the manufacturer's operating manual prior to turning on the water supply and re-starting dental units. Procedures may vary, but normally flushing the unit for at least one minute is a minimum recommendation. Some units may require a disinfection rinse.
- Run cold water faucets and drinking water fountains for one minute before using the water.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle. Drain and refill hot water heaters.

Resources

Please also see the latest version of Infection Control Guidelines in Dental Offices on the RCDSO's web site: www.rcdso.org/pdf/guidelines/infect_control.pdg