



FACT SHEET

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Guidelines for Dental Offices during a Boil Water Advisory

General Guidelines during a Boil Water Advisory:

These are general guidelines for use during a Boil Water Advisory (BWA). Further instructions may be issued by the Grey Bruce Health Unit.

- Untreated tap water is unsafe for drinking, making ice, for use during dental procedures, brushing teeth, gargling, and rinsing dentures or dental appliances.
- Bring untreated tap water to a rolling boil in a heat resistant-container or in an electric kettle without an automatic shut-off for one minute to kill all disease-causing organisms, or use commercially bottled water.
- Sterile saline and distilled water are safe for dental and disinfection procedures.
- If you make ice in-house, discard any previously made ice and disinfect the ice cube tray. Use safe water to make new ice.
- Post a notice at all water fountains and faucets advising “Do not drink the water, use the water to make ice, or use the water for dental hygiene without boiling first”.
- Use potable water to dilute chemical disinfectants and germicides.

To avoid contaminating dental equipment:

- Turn off the water supply to drinking water fountains and dental units such as triple 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 and post do not use signs.

Hand washing Guidelines during a BWA:

If the boil water order has been issued as a precaution and there is no outbreak of human illness, there is no need for additional hand sanitizing with alcohol based rub. If you use an alcohol based hand rub, ensure it contains between 70-90% alcohol (e.g., ethanol, isopropanol).

Before Treatment:

- Explain to all patients the impact that the boil water order has on dental care.
- Postpone elective restorative and surgical procedures until the BWA has been lifted wherever possible.

During Treatment:

- Run slow-speed turbines dry as per usual practice.
- Avoid dry cutting when removing old amalgam restorations.
- Run high-speed turbines using 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, 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.

After Treatment:

- Remind patients to use only boiled or commercially bottled water for dental hygiene at home during the boil water order if they are within the affected area.

After the Boil Water Advisory has been lifted:

- The responsible authority or water utility will provide instructions on flushing water pipes. It is important to carefully follow the instructions provided*.
- Disconnect, clean, and disinfect the x-ray processor as per manufacturer's instructions.
- Consult your facility's manager, 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 generally flushing the unit for at least one minute to five minutes is a minimum recommendation. Some units may require a disinfection rinse.
- Run cold water faucets and drinking water fountains for one to five minutes before using the water.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle (follow manufacturer's directions).
- Drain and refill hot water heaters. They may need to be disinfected and flushed to remove any contaminated water. Check with the manufacturer for details.

Resources:

See the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee guidelines (Best Practices for Infection Prevention and Control Programs in Ontario and Best Practices for Cleaning, Disinfection and Sterilization of Medical Equipment/Devices in All Health Care Settings) available at www.oahpp.ca and the latest version of Infection Control Guidelines in Dental Offices on the RCDSO's web site www.rcdso.org.

Reference:

Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario, Dispatch, 1998 (April):19.

*Health Canada. (2008). *Boil Water Advisories and Boil Water Orders*. Retrieved July 22, 2013 from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/water-eau/boil-ebullition-eng.php>