

Purifying Household Water

The following treatments work only in situations where water is unsafe because of the presence of bacteria. If you suspect water is unsafe because of chemicals, oils, poisonous substances, sewage, etc., do not use the water for drinking.

Storing water safely

- Store one gallon of water per person per day for drinking purposes.
- Store at least a three-day supply of drinking water per person
- Collect the water from a safe supply.
- Store water in thoroughly washed plastic, fiberglass or metal containers that are lined with enamel.
- Never reuse a container that contained toxic materials such as pesticides, solvents, chemicals, oil, antifreeze, etc.
- Plastic containers such as soft drink bottles are best. You can also purchase food-grade plastic buckets or drums.
- Seal water containers tightly, date label them, and store in a cool, dark place.
- Replace water every six months.

Water purification

- There are two primary ways of treating water; boiling and adding bleach. Boiling is the safest method of purifying water.
- Cloudy water should be filtered before boiling or adding bleach.
- Filter water using coffee filters, paper towels, clean cloth, or a cotton plug in a funnel.

Boiling

- Bring the water to a rolling boil for 3-5 minutes.
- Let the water cool before drinking.
- Purifying by adding liquid chlorine bleach
- If boiling water is not possible, water can be made safe for drinking by treating with liquid household chlorine bleach, such as Clorox, Purex, etc. Household bleach typically is 5.25% chlorine. Do not use scented bleaches, colorsafe bleaches or bleaches with added cleaners. Be sure to read the label.
- Place the water (filtered, if necessary) in a clean container. Add the amount of bleach according to the table below. Mix thoroughly and allow to stand for at least 30 minutes before using (60 minutes if the water is cloudy or very cold).
- Purification tablets or chemicals designed for use when camping or backpacking can also be an effective way to treat water. These tablets or chemicals are available at most drugstores or camping supply stores. Always follow the directions on the package.

In an emergency, you may use water from your hot water tank. Turn the power to the tank off first before draining it!

Treating Water with a 5.25 Percent Liquid Chlorine Bleach Solution		
Volume of Water to be Treated	Treating Clear Water: Bleach Solution to Add	Treating Cloudy, Very Cold, or Surface Water: Bleach Solution to Add
1 quart/1 liter	3 drops	5 drops
½ gallon/2 quarts/2 liters	5 drops	10 drops or 1/8 tsp
1 gallon	10 drops or 1/8 tsp	20 drops or ¼ tsp
5 gallons	50 drops or 2.5ml or ½ tsp	5ml or 1 tsp
10 gallons	5ml or 1 tsp	10 ml or 2 tsp
tsp = teaspoon; ml = milliliter		