

# Fact Sheet: How to Make Your Water Safe to Drink

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In the wake of Hurricane Maria and flooding in Puerto Rico, water may not be available or safe for drinking, bathing, or washing clothes. Floods and other disasters can contaminate and damage drinking water wells and lead to aquifer and well contamination.

The following tips can help you ensure your drinking water is safe.

- Do not use water you suspect is contaminated. Contaminated water can lead to illness.
- Do not use suspected or contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, make ice, or make baby formula.
- Do not use water from the following:
  - Radiators
  - Hot water boilers (part of your home heating system)
  - Water beds (fungicides added to the water and/or chemicals in the vinyl may make water unsafe for use)
- Do not try to boil or disinfect water contaminated with fuel or toxic chemicals. If you suspect your water has fuel or chemical contamination, contact your local health department for specific advice.
- Do not drink alcohol, as it dehydrates the body, which increases the need for drinking water.

## **Make Your Water Safe by:**

- **Boiling**
  - If water is cloudy, allow to settle, then skim the clean water above the sediment. You can also filter through clean cloth, paper towel, or coffee filter before boiling.
  - Store the boiled water in clean sanitized containers with tight covers.



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- **Disinfect by using:**
  - Unscented household chlorine bleach or iodine (useful against most, but not all, harmful viruses or bacteria.
  - When using bleach, read the label carefully to ensure you use the proper concentration.
  - Chlorine dioxide tablets (useful against organisms resistant to bleach or iodine)
- **Filtering**
  - Filter water through a clean cloth, paper towel, or coffee filter or allow it to settle, then draw off the clear water.
  - Use a portable water filter.
    - Ensure the filter's pore size is small enough to remove bacteria and parasites.
    - Carefully read and follow the manufacturer's instructions. After filtering, add a disinfectant such as iodine, chlorine, or chlorine dioxide to the filtered water to kill any viruses and remaining bacteria.

## Finding Emergency Water Sources

Alternative sources of clean water can be found inside and outside the home. The following are possible sources of water:

- Water from your home's water heater tank (part of your drinking water system, not your home heating system)
- Melted ice cubes made with water that was not contaminated
- Water from your home's toilet tank (not from the bowl), if it is clear and has not been chemically treated with toilet cleaners such as those that change the color of the water
- Liquid from canned fruit and vegetables
- Water from swimming pools, spas, and collected rain water can be used for personal hygiene and cleaning, **but not for drinking.**

## Water Treatment Resources:

To learn more about water filters and treatments that can remove microorganisms such as viruses, bacteria, and parasites (such as *Cryptosporidium*), see the following resources:



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- Making Water Safe in an Emergency:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/emergency/drinking/making-water-safe.html>
- A Guide to Water Filters:  
[https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/crypto/gen\\_info/filters.html](https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/crypto/gen_info/filters.html)
- A Guide to Drinking Water Treatment and Sanitation for Backcountry and Travel Use (covers information on the effectiveness of various water treatment methods):  
[https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/travel/backcountry\\_water\\_treatment.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/travel/backcountry_water_treatment.html)
- A Guide to Commercially-Bottled Water and Other Beverages:  
[https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/crypto/gen\\_info/bottled.html](https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/crypto/gen_info/bottled.html)
- Emergency Disinfection of Drinking Water:  
[https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/travel/emergency\\_disinfection.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/travel/emergency_disinfection.html)

Listen to local officials' reports on what water precautions to take in your home. It may be necessary to shut off the main water valve to your home to prevent contaminants from entering your piping system.

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*Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at **800-621-3362** (voice, **711/VRS** - Video Relay Service) (TTY: **800-462-7585**). Multilingual operators are available (press 2 for Spanish).*

*The SBA is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged property. SBA helps businesses of all sizes, private non-profit organizations, homeowners and renters, which can cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged real estate and personal property. These disaster loans cover losses not fully compensated by insurance or other recoveries and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations.*



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