

WEST VIRGINIA BUREAU FOR PUBLIC HEALTH  
PUBLIC HEALTH SANITATION DIVISION

**HOW TO DISINFECT SMALL QUANTITIES OF WATER  
FOR USE DURING PERIODS OF NATURAL DISASTERS**

During a natural disaster, water supplies can become contaminated. Using contaminated water for drinking, washing dishes, brushing teeth, washing and preparing food, and making ice may lead to serious illness or even death.

**“THINK BEFORE YOU DRINK”**

The following procedures may be used to disinfect small amounts of water for use:

Before disinfection, remove debris from the water. If muddy, allow the dirt to settle out. Pour off the clear water in a clean container; this is what will be disinfected.

Boiling water kills harmful microorganisms and parasites. Bring the water to a rolling boil for one (1) minute.

Water may be treated with chlorine or iodine tablets made for this purpose, or by mixing ten (10) drops (one-quarter (1/4) teaspoon) of unscented, ordinary household chlorine bleach (five and one-quarter percent (5.25%) sodium hypochlorite) with one (1) gallon of water.

Mix well and let stand for thirty (30) minutes. Water should have a distinct taste or smell of chlorine. If chlorine taste or smell is not present, add ten (10) more drops (one-quarter (1/4) teaspoon) of bleach and allow to stand for fifteen (15) minutes before using.

Do not use the water if you cannot detect chlorine in it. Note: this process does not kill parasitic organisms. Boiling water for one (1) minute at a rolling boil is the only safe way to kill parasites that may be present in flood affected water.

REMEMBER that coffee and tea are safe only when made with water that has been treated. Water used for brushing teeth, bathing, washing dishes, making ice, or for cooking requires the same treatment as water for drinking.