Make water safe to drink

Under a boil-water notice, follow your water utility or health department first.

1. **Cloudy?** Filter it through a clean cloth, paper towel, or coffee filter, or let it settle and draw off the clear water.[1]
2. **Best: boil.** A rolling boil for 1 minute (3 minutes above 6,500 feet). Let it cool. Store in clean, covered containers.[1]
3. **No way to boil? Use bleach.** Regular, unscented chlorine bleach only; no scented, color-safe, or added-cleaner bleach.[2] Follow the label's directions if it has them.[1]
4. **Bleach with 5–9% sodium hypochlorite:** 8 drops per gallon, or ½ teaspoon per 5 gallons. Double it if the water is cloudy, colored, or very cold.[1]
5. **Stir, then wait at least 30 minutes** before drinking.[1]
6. **Tablets or drops:** follow the label. Iodine and chlorine tablets will not kill Cryptosporidium; chlorine dioxide tablets will, if used as directed.[1]
7. **Portable filter?** Filters don't remove viruses. After filtering, add a chemical disinfectant.[1]

Don't: boil or treat water when the notice says "Do not drink" or "Do not use." Use bottled water.[1]

Stay-Go Guide · official steps, checked 16 November 2026 · Follow your local officials first.

Sources

1. CDC: How to Make Water Safe in an Emergency
2. U.S. EPA: Emergency Disinfection of Drinking Water

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