

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

No. 101.16

CONTAMINATED DRINKING WATER

After a cyclone or flood, the water supply may be contaminated or cut off. There are steps you can take if you are concerned about the safety of drinking water:

- Any dirty or cloudy water you suspect may be contaminated should be brought to a rolling boil for three (3) minutes and cooled before drinking.
- Concentrated household bleach can be used to disinfect water, at a rate of 10 drops per litre. Leave for at least 30 minutes before drinking- the chlorine smell and taste will dissipate if the water is left to stand overnight. Check that bleach does not contain fragrances or additives.
- Swimming pool water can be treated by boiling or treating as above with household chlorine bleach and used for drinking.
- Water can be strained through a clean cloth to remove dirt, debris and mud before boiling or treating.
- Water in your hot water system can be used for drinking - take care against scalding.
- Untreated water (e.g. from swimming pools, rainfall, seawater) can be used for flushing toilets.
- Do not use drinking water unnecessarily (e.g. for washing clothes, dishes).
- When the water supply is restored, turn on taps for at least two minutes to flush out sediment in the pipes.

fact sheet