

Saving water and keeping healthy

Water shortages can occur during emergencies, droughts, natural disasters, or contamination of a water supply. In these situations, your council or water supplier may issue water restrictions, or a boil water, do not drink or do not use water notice. During such events, conserving water is crucial to ensure there is enough clean water for everyone to stay hydrated and keep healthy.

Drinking water should be treated water

It is important that drinking water is treated to make it is safe to drink.

In an emergency, **treated water** for drinking is:

- boiled water
- bottled water, or
- treated with purification tablets or bleach.

Refer to www.taumataarowai.govt.nz/stay-safe-during-a-boil-water-notice for options on how to disinfect water.

If you are not sure if your tap water is safe to drink, check with your drinking water supplier. For most people, this is your local council. If you are on a private supply, you will need to arrange for the water to be tested.

Use of treated water

During shortages, use your drinking water for:

- drinking
- brushing your teeth
- washing your hands and body
- cooking
- preparing food, washing fruit and vegetables
- making up baby formula and sterilising baby bottles and teats
- washing dishes.

Untreated water

Untreated water like rainwater, bore water and water in rivers, lakes and swimming pools may not be safe to drink.

Untreated water can be used for other purposes:

- pouring into the toilet to flush
- washing clothes
- washing floors
- watering gardens
- cleaning cars.

Keeping healthy during water shortages

- Keep up your intake of drinking water, especially if it is hot. It is important for all whānau members to keep hydrated.
- When water is in short supply, keeping your hands clean is still important.
- Wash your hands with soap and safe water (treated, boiled or bottled) and dry before preparing and eating food, and after the toilet.
- Each person should use their own water in a bowl for handwashing. Do not share handwashing water.
- Sanitiser is not effective against gastro bugs like norovirus and hepatitis, so wash your hands with safe water, soap and dry well.
- You can use sanitiser after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. Use enough sanitiser to cover your hands, rub it in and allow to dry.
- You can flush the toilet less, after a bowel motion (poo) only. Close the toilet lid after urinating (weeing).
- Showering every second day is okay.
- If bathing babies every second day, wash their hands, face, ears and bottom on the alternate days.
- You can also collect water in clean containers left in the rain. Make sure all rainwater is treated or boiled first.

Water collection tanks during drought

Tank water may run low during a drought. This poses an additional risk from contamination at the bottom of the tank. Tanks often have leaves, soil or debris from animals in the bottom of the tank.

This contamination can cause serious illness (for example, diarrhoea and vomiting), which can be particularly dangerous for infants, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems.

- Dry weather can affect water quality. Keep roofs, gutters, screens and tanks clean to reduce the risk of contamination.
- Watch water levels and top up from a registered supplier to ensure the water never gets low.
- Clean your tank before you get a fill up or if levels run low. Ideally tank cleaning should be carried out by tank cleaning contractors.
- Water filters for bacteria and UV water treatment units should be regularly cleaned and maintained, especially when water levels are low.
- A heavy rainfall after drought can flush greater amounts of contaminants into the tank and also stir up sediment – use a first flush diverter or boil/treat water.
- If you are unsure whether the water is safe to drink, boil it or treat it using bleach or water purification tablets. For water treatment options on how to disinfect water: www.taumataarowai.govt.nz/treating-water

For more information

- To make water safe during a boil water notice: www.taumataarowai.govt.nz/stay-safe-during-a-boil-water-notice
- For more tips on saving water during a drought and simple things you can do every day to save water: www.taumataarowai.govt.nz/dry-weather
- Drinking water information in an emergency: www.taumataarowai.govt.nz/incidents-and-emergencies
- Phone Healthline on **0800 611 116** for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- If you are feeling stressed or anxious You can text or phone **1737** anytime to speak to a trained counsellor for free.