



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION



09 December 2013

FDA ADVISORY

No. **2013-062**

**SUBJECT: MANDATORY BOILING OF COLIFORM BACTERIA-CONTAMINATED
DRINKING WATER IN TACLOBAN CITY AND NEARBY AREAS, AND
OTHER TIPS**

The Department of Health has recently tested the presence of coliform bacteria in community water supplies in Tacloban City and other nearby calamity stricken areas. The presence of coliform bacteria in water supply indicates fecal contamination, either from human or animal feces, and therefore water is non-potable or unsafe to drink unless boiled properly.

There are different coliform bacteria that can possibly contaminate the water supply. One of the most common species of coliform bacteria is *Escherichia coli* or *E. coli* bacteria that are commonly found in the digestive system of humans and animals. There are different types of *E. coli*, some which can cause serious illness such as *E. coli* 0157:H7. The maximum tolerable concentration of *E. coli* is "0" in drinking water.

Thus, all households in calamity stricken area with contaminated water supply are advised on the following:

- Boil drinking water for at least 1 minute (to 20 minutes) prior to use, and allow to cool in a clean, covered container.
- When you buy commercially prepared bottled water, make sure that it is sourced from reliable water refilling stations or FDA-licensed bottled water manufacturer.
- Home filtration devices do not kill bacteria, including those marketed with ultraviolet (UV) lights. In order to be effective, pathogens must be exposed to the UV light for a long period of time, that is overnight, and not as water flows from the device.
- Remember to use boiled water for the following:
 - a) When brushing your teeth.
 - b) When preparing ready-to-eat cereals, milk, milk formulae and substitutes for infants and children. Make sure that the spoon used for scooping milk and the infant bottle or container are also sterilized.
 - c) When washing fruits and vegetables and preparing concentrated fruit drinks.
 - d) When preparing ice cubes.
 - e) When washing food containers, cooking utensils and surfaces used in preparing food.
- Wash hands with liquid soap and rinse using the following solution: Place 1 teaspoon or 5 ml of liquid household chlorine bleach in 4 liters of water. Mix and let stand for at least

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15 minutes before using. The mixture can be transferred to smaller clean containers for use and label, e.g. for "hand washing" and "not for drinking".

- Alcohol-based hand disinfectants containing at least 70% isopropyl alcohol may be used in situations where water is not available. The wet wipes used for cleaning babies at diaper change are not effective for disinfecting hands.
- Untreated water may be used for taking a bath, but should never be swallowed.
- Untreated water may be used for washing clothes.
- Flush after using the toilet. Do not throw baby diapers, human and animal waste anywhere. Dig a pit on the ground, away from sources of water supply or pipes of water, and cover.
- Family pets can become infected and have been shown to be a source of outbreaks involving children handling animals infected with E.coli 0157:H7.

Make sure to report symptoms of possible food-borne infections, like stomach cramps, diarrhea, fever, nausea, and vomiting, and go visit the doctor or other public health workers.

Avoid dehydration when suffering from diarrhea, but make sure you drink oral rehydration solution or boiled water only.

If you have bloody diarrhea that may be from an E. coli infection, visit your doctor as soon as possible. Do not take diarrhea medicine or antibiotics which can slow down the digestion process, allowing more time for your body to absorb the poisons made by the E. coli. In some people, E. coli infection causes serious blood and kidney problems. Always consult the doctor.

For more information or clarification, please email us at info@fda.gov.ph.


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