

Warning to Drinking Water Customers

Your tap water is contaminated with nitrate. Do not give it to infants under 12 months old or other susceptible individuals. Do not use it to make formula or juice for infants.

What's the problem?

The _____ Water System, ID # _____, in _____ County, received drinking water sample results on _____ showing nitrate levels of _____ mg/L. This level is above the 10 mg/L nitrate standard, or Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL), allowed by the State Board of Health Rules and Regulations.

Nitrate in drinking water can come from natural, industrial, or agricultural sources (including septic systems and run-off). Levels of nitrate in drinking water can vary throughout the year. Most household water filtration systems will not remove nitrate.

The main risk is to infants below the age of 12 months, who could become seriously ill and, if untreated, may die. Symptoms include shortness of breath and "blue baby syndrome," indicated by blueness of the skin. Symptoms in infants can develop rapidly, with health deteriorating over a period of days. Other susceptible individuals include pregnant women and people with certain blood disorders. These individuals may wish to consult their doctor regarding risk of consuming high-nitrate water. Susceptible individuals should use an alternative source of drinking water until further notice.

Do's and Don'ts

- Adults (except pregnant women) and children older than 12 months can drink the tap water. Nitrate is a problem for infants less than 12 months old because they can't process nitrate as well as adults can.
- Share this information with others who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or delivering copies by hand.
- People with certain rare blood enzyme disorders which affect their ability to convert methemoglobin to hemoglobin (glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) or cytochrome b5 reductase deficiencies) should use another source of water until further notice.
- Don't give the water to infants under 12 months old.
- Don't use the water to make formula or juice for infants under 12 months old.
- If an infant shows signs of "blue baby syndrome" (bluish skin, shortness of breath) **get medical attention immediately.**
- If you are pregnant or think you may be, use another source of water until further notice.
- **Don't try to make the water okay by boiling it.** Boiling, freezing, filtering, or letting water stand does not reduce nitrate levels. Excessive boiling can even make the nitrate more concentrated, because it stays behind as water evaporates.

What's being done?

Your water system is taking these corrective actions:

For more information, contact _____ at _____

This notice was sent to you by _____ Water System on _____

Instructions to water systems for notifying customers about nitrate violations

1. You must tell your customers about a nitrate violation **within 24 hours** of being notified that a nitrate MCL violation has occurred. Use the “Warning to Drinking Water Customers” on the other side of this notice as your basic template for public notification.
2. Call the Department of Health (DOH) within 24 hours of receiving a laboratory result that shows a nitrate MCL exceedance has occurred. If you have been notified of a nitrate MCL exceedance and have not yet consulted with DOH, do so immediately.
3. DOH will help you decide how best to distribute this notice to all of your customers. Call your DOH Regional Office (see information below) and fill out all sections of this notice. Copy the other side and deliver the notice to your customers by the method indicated by DOH.
4. You must provide an alternative source of drinking water to customers who request it. The water must be from an approved public water supply or source and be distributed at a convenient location. Examples: A filling station for containers provided by the customer, bottled water, or coupons to purchase bottled water from a local merchant. One-and-a-half (1.5) gallons of water per person per day should be provided for drinking only. Your regional office can help you with technical questions related to providing an alternative source of drinking water for your customers.
5. You should let your customers know what they need to do if they wish to receive an alternative source of drinking water. Use the space provided under the heading “What’s Being Done?” to give details related to how and where you are providing an alternative source of drinking water. An example would be “Contact John Doe at (555) 555-5555 if you would like an alternative source of water until sample results are below the MCL.”
6. In your notice, under the heading “What’s Being Done?”, also describe corrective actions you are taking. The following sentence gives an example of one action commonly taken by water systems that have nitrate violations. Use this sentence if it is true for your situation, or develop your own language.

“We are investigating water treatment options, such as drilling a new well, mixing the water with low-nitrate water from another source, or buying water from another water system.”

7. Within 10 days of delivering this notice to your customers, send a copy of each type of notice that you distributed (hand-delivered form, newspaper article, etc.) and a signed “**Public Notice Certification Nitrate MCL Violation**” form (#331-248) to your appropriate DOH Regional Office. **This documentation is a mandatory requirement and must be completed.**

DOH REGIONAL OFFICE INFORMATION

Eastern Regional Office: 1500 W. 4th Ave., Suite 305, Spokane WA 99204; Main Office (509) 456-3115.

Jurisdiction: Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Whitman, Walla Walla and Yakima Counties.

Northwest Regional Office: 20435 72nd Ave S., Suite 200, Kent WA 98032; Main Office (253) 395-6750.

Jurisdiction: Island, King, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom Counties.

Southwest Regional Office: 243 Israel Road SE, Tumwater, PO Box 47823, Olympia WA 98504; Main Office (360) 236-3030.

Jurisdiction: Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Skamania, Thurston, and Wahkiakum Counties.