

Why Treat The Water?

Our province has a good supply of fresh water for drinking. But even the best water source can contain germs which could make you sick. Most towns treat their drinking water to kill possible disease-causing germs like *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, and *E. coli*, and to protect the water from other germs as it moves through the pipes.



Why Use Chlorine?

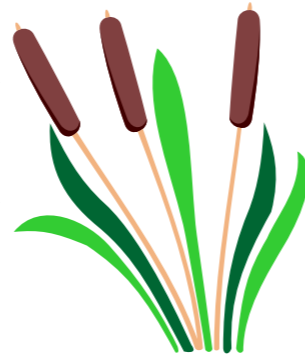
There are many ways to treat drinking water to make it safe. Chlorine is the most common treatment in this province and throughout the world because it is safe, affordable, it works well, and it is easy to use.

Our province has set standards for the amounts of chlorine needed to treat and protect drinking water. If there is not enough chlorine in the water, the town may be given a “Boil Water Advisory”.

How Can Chlorine Affect My Health?

The chlorine normally used in town water will not cause any serious health effects, because of the very small amounts used. However, some people who are sensitive to chlorine may have a mild rash or dry skin after bathing or showering.

Other health effects may be caused by the chemicals formed when chlorine combines with things



like dead leaves and animal waste, found in ponds and rivers. One type of these chemicals is called trihalomethanes, or THMs.

Note: The Guidelines For Canadian Drinking Water Quality set the standard for THM levels in drinking water. In the case of THMs, the annual average level is used to compare with the standard.

How Can THMs Affect My Health?

Recent studies have said that people who drank water with high THMs for many years, were more likely to get bladder and colon cancer. However, the risk of getting cancer from THMs is very small.

There is also research that shows that problems with pregnancy, such as miscarriage, birth defects and low birth weight, can be more common for women who drink water with high THMs for many years.

Remember: The risk of getting sick or dying from drinking pond or river water without chlorine, is greater than the risk of having your health affected by THMs.



What If I Can Smell Or Taste Chlorine?

You may smell and/or taste chlorine in the water when the chlorine level is high or low, or when small amounts of chlorine touch rubber found in hoses, washers, or tap screens.



These smells and tastes are only health concerns when the chlorine level is extremely high or low. If the smells and tastes are unusual, contact your town office.

What is the Government Doing for Me?

Your local council does routine testing of the chlorine levels in the town water. The Government Service Centre also checks the chlorine levels and takes samples for germ testing. Finally, the Department of Environment does regular chemical testing (including THMs) for this water. You can get the results of those tests from your town council, or from the website:

www.gov.nl.ca/env/water

Should I Stop Drinking The Town Water?

Town water is generally safe and is tested on a regular basis. You do not need to stop drinking the water unless you have been told to do so by government officials.

Please Note: If you are concerned about the possible health risks from high THMs, you may choose to buy a home water treatment unit to remove THMs, or you may drink approved well water, or bottled water. **Do not drink untreated surface water from ponds or rivers, or water from roadside springs.**



Can I Remove Chlorine or THMs From My Drinking Water?

Certain home drinking water treatment units, such as charcoal filters, can remove some THMs and chlorine. If you decide to buy one of these units:

- make sure that it is designed to remove THMs ("NSF Standard 53" should be on the label)
- follow the directions
- change the filter often
- in the case of water filter jugs, store them in the fridge

See www.nsf.org for more information about water filters.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please contact an Environmental Health Officer at the nearest **Government Service Centre:**

Regional Government Service Centre Offices:

Happy Valley - Goose Bay
Corner Brook
Grand Falls - Windsor
Gander
Clarenville
Harbour Grace
St. John's

or, a regional Environmental Health Manager:

Regional Health and Community Services & Integrated Health Board Locations:

Happy Valley - Goose Bay
St. Anthony
Corner Brook
Gander
Holyrood
St. John's

or, an official from the Water Resources Management Division of the Department of Environment.



Partnering
for Health
Department of Health & Community Services

Department of Health & Community Services
Department of Government Services & Lands
Department of Environment

Health & Community Services Boards

July 2003

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT...

CHLORINE AND THMs



DRINKING WATER AWARENESS



GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR