

# Safe Drinking Water and Other Beverages for Immunocompromised Patients

---

## **Can I Drink Tap Water?**

Drinking tap water from municipal wells serving highly populated areas is regarded as safe from bacterial contamination. The water in these wells is tested at least twice a day for bacterial contamination.

Do not drink well water from private wells or from public wells in communities with limited populations. Tests for microbial contamination in these wells are not done often enough to detect bacterial contamination.

Boiling water is the best method of killing *Cryptosporidium* and other microbes in water. After boiling the water store it in the refrigerator in a clean bottle or pitcher with a lid. To prevent re-contamination, be careful not to touch the inside of the water bottle or lid.

Monitor news on TV and radio in your area to find out immediately if a boil-water advisory has been issued for people with compromised immunity. These advisories are issued by state or local governments. A boil-water advisory means that you need to boil all tap water for at least one minute before drinking it.

## **What is the best information about Water Filters?**

Water filters remove microbes such as *Cryptosporidium* Oocysts and *Giardia lamblia* from water. Use a filter labeled with an “absolute” (not “nominal”) pore size of one micron or smaller. This filter will remove all oocysts (viruses, however, can pass through a one-micron filter). Reverse Osmosis is a water

purification system that prevents oocysts from passing through. These filters may be either attached to a faucet or have a pour-through design. They treat water used for drinking or preparing foods.

To see if a certain filter can remove *Cryptosporidium* Oocysts, contact NSF-International directly at 1-800-673-8010 or 888-99-SAFER. You can also email: [info@nsf.org](mailto:info@nsf.org) or visit <http://www.nsf.org/certified/DWTU/>

### **Can I drink bottled water?**

You may drink bottled water if it has been processed by one of three processes: reverse osmosis, distillation, or 1 micron particulate absolute filtration. It is also acceptable to use bottled water that has been tested and certified by NSF Standard 53 or NSF Standard 58 cyst removal/cyst reduction. To confirm the bottled water has undergone one of these processes, contact the International Bottled Water Association (IBWA) at 1-800-928-3711 or visit their website at <http://www.bottledwater.org>. If IBWA does not have the information you are looking for, contact the bottling company directly.

Note: Bottled water labeled as: “artesian well water,” “well water,” “spring water,” or “mineral water” could still contain *Cryptosporidium* or other pathogens if the water has not been processed. That is why it is important to make sure your bottled water has gone through one of the three processes listed above.

### **What other precautions should I take?**

Ice made from an ice machine is ok. However, if ice is being scooped out of a large ice container, you should avoid it unless the server is wearing gloves.

Do not drink unpasteurized milk, fruit, or vegetable juices. Safe drink choices include:

- Nationally distributed brands of bottled or canned carbonated soft drinks and beer
- Commercially packaged non-carbonated drinks that contain fruit juice
- Fruit juices that do not require refrigeration until after opening
- Canned or bottled soda, seltzer or fruit drinks
- Steaming hot (more than 175 F) tea or coffee
- Juices labeled as pasteurized
- Nationally distributed brands of frozen fruit juice concentrate that are reconstituted with water from a safe source.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Authors: Chelsea Harding, BSN, RN, OCN and Sarah Price, RD

Patient Education by [Michigan Medicine](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#).

Last Revised 03/2017