

Provisional Policy Statement regarding
**Ingestion of Contaminated Water
During or Following a Natural Disaster**

From time to time, circumstances may dictate that normally safe municipal water supplies are at high risk of contamination with infectious agents. The risk associated with ingestion of microbiologically contaminated water is generally small but will vary from person to person, depending on:

- the amount of water ingested,
- the nature and severity of contamination, and
- the immune status of the person ingesting the water

In general, a previously healthy person who ingests a small amount of water contaminated with small amounts of coliform bacteria has a minimally increased risk of illness, but this risk increases with ingestion of larger amounts or high degrees of contamination. In any event, previously healthy individuals should contact their physicians or seek emergent care *only if symptoms develop* after ingestion of microbiologically contaminated water. Immunocompromised individuals should contact their physician if they have ingested water known to be microbiologically contaminated.

The risk from microbial contamination of water can be minimized by briskly boiling the water for at least 3 minutes, then allowing it to cool before use.

RJG
10/5/95, rev. 9/4/96

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