



Guidance for HEALTH CARE Providers and Facilities

RE: Cyanotoxins in Public Drinking Water Systems

Revised: June 6, 2018

There are no federal or state standards for cyanotoxins in drinking water. Data are lacking on which to make definitive recommendations. Below is guidance for health care providers and facilities to consider in protecting patient health.

At current drinking water advisory levels, patients could be exposed to cyanotoxins by either drinking the water, or through direct contact with mucus membranes, open wounds or during surgical procedures. Health care providers and facilities will need to evaluate their practice setting and patient populations to make decisions about implementing this guidance. Hospitals and health care facilities should consider risks associated with the water advisory, the facility's water treatment capabilities, and the medical risks to the patient in delaying treatment when determining whether to proceed with non-emergency surgeries or procedures.

Hospitals and Health Care Facilities

At drinking water advisory levels, hospitals and health care facilities should not use tap water for patient care that includes washing open wounds or exposed tissues unless the water has been treated at the facility to remove cyanotoxins.

- Sterilization – While the risk at drinking water advisory levels is low, cyanotoxins are heat stable and are not removed by heating. Trace amounts of these toxins may remain on equipment that is steam autoclaved with tap water. Hospitals and health care facilities should evaluate the priority of procedures and surgeries when making decisions about which procedures may be delayed until the advisory is lifted.
- Washing Surfaces – At drinking water advisory levels, tap water can be used to dilute disinfectants and to clean surfaces.
- Wound Care – Tap water should not be used for washing or cleaning exposed tissue or wounds.

Dental Offices

At drinking water advisory levels, dental offices should not administer tap water to patients through the dental unit, ultrasonic scaler, or other dental equipment. Patients should rinse with bottled or distilled water until the drinking water advisory has been cancelled.

Dialysis Centers/ In-home Dialysis

At drinking water advisory levels, dialysis centers and in-home dialysis units should not use tap water in dialysis units. Dialysis units that pre-treat water from the public water supply using reverse osmosis may continue to use the water for dialysis. Dialysis centers may consider using pre-packaged dialysate throughout the drinking water advisory. All dialysate water, except for pre-packaged dialysate, must be frequently tested after treatment to ensure the efficacy of the treatment unit prior to use.

Other types of facilities (e.g. Skilled Nursing/Long-Term Care, Birthing Centers)

- At drinking water advisory levels, skilled nursing facilities should not use tap water for patient care that includes washing open wounds or exposed tissues unless the water has been treated at the facility to remove toxins.
- Facilities should follow the drinking water advisory issued by the local community and/or public water system. Check their website or www.cityofsalem.net for information.