Water Rules

For patients in all buildings at the Victoria General site and the Nova Scotia Rehabilitation Centre

Aussi disponible en français :
Règles de sécurité liées à l’eau (FF85-1716)
Water Rules

Water rules do not apply to all patients. Depending on your medical condition or illness, the nurses will advise you if you need to follow these water rules.

Why are there water rules in place for some patients in the hospital?

Legionella pneumophila is a type of bacteria commonly found in water. It is found in fresh water lakes, soil, and sometimes in the plumbing systems of large, old buildings like hospitals or hotels. This bacteria rarely makes healthy people sick. However, some illnesses and treatments make it harder for the body to fight infection. If you breathe in these bacteria, they may cause a type of lung infection (pneumonia) called Legionnaire’s disease.

It is also common to get a very small amount of water into our lungs when we drink water, shower, or brush our teeth. This is called aspiration. Aspiration is another way Legionella bacteria can get into the lungs.

How can I avoid Legionella bacteria?

Ask the nursing staff to instruct you about the water rules to follow while in the hospital.
These water rules include:

**Bathing:**
- Take a bath or sponge bath instead of a shower.
- The nurse will run the water for you. The water should be stopped before you get into the tub.
- Do not use a whirlpool tub.
- Do not fill up the wash basin or sink for yourself. Ask the nurse to do this for you.
- Do not wash your hair when you are in the tub or at the sink. Ask a nurse to help you wash your hair.

**Bottled water:**
Bottled water is supplied by the hospital and tested for Legionella bacteria. Use it for:
- Drinking
- Making ice cubes
- Washing fresh fruit/vegetables before eating
- Brushing your teeth or dentures
- Adding water to your mouthwash
- Rinsing your mouth out

When taking medications, only use the bottled water, juice, milk, or canned/bottled pop that the hospital gives you.

Do not drink fountain pop or use ice from the cafeteria/ice machines as they are made from tap water.
You may drink the tea and coffee from the hospital cafeterias. Tap water may be used for making tea or coffee on the nursing units. **Wait for the water to come to a full rolling boil.** Boiling the water kills any Legionella bacteria that may be in the water.

Do not use the nursing unit washers or dryers. It is safe to eat and drink everything that comes on your meal tray. It is also safe to use the sink to wash your hands after using the toilet. Be careful not to breathe in sprayed tap water or mist while washing.

It is very important for your health that you follow these rules while in the hospital.

**Have questions?**

Please ask your nurse if you have any questions or concerns. An infection control practitioner is also available to talk about these safety rules with you.

Looking for more health information? Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: [http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides](http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides)

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