

Frequently Asked Questions about Chloramine

As part of the ongoing commitment in maintaining and improving drinking water quality, the Township of North Glengarry, is introducing Chloramine into the distribution system. Chloramine, a combination of chlorine and ammonia, is going to be added to the water before it travels through the distribution system. Chloramine is an effective and long-lasting disinfecting agent that is safe for drinking, cooking and bathing.

- Why does the Township use chloramine?
- Is chloramine safe?
- What are trihalomethanes (THMS)?
- Does using chloramine increase the cost of water?
- Do home water softeners remove chloramine?
- Does bottled water have chloramine?
- Does the pH of water remain the same with chloramine?
- What does chloraminated water taste like?
- If chloramine is such an effective disinfectant, why is it not used in every community?
- Is chloramine safe for swimming pools?
- What is the impact of chloramine on pets?

Why does the Township use chloramine?

Here's why the Township of North Glengarry switched from using chlorine to chloramine:

- Chloramine is a more stable and persistent disinfectant. It preserves the quality of the purified water as it travels through the water distribution system;
- Chloramine helps to reduce disinfection by-products such as trihalomethanes (THM's) in the water;
- Chloramine reduces the taste and odour of chlorine in tap water.

Is chloramine safe?

YES. Chloramine has been used safely in Canada and the United States for years. Many water utilities are in the process of switching to chloramine because of its benefits.

The Ontario ministry of Environment (MOE) and Health Canada recognize chloramine as a safe disinfectant that reduces the formation of disinfection by-products and disease-causing organisms. Chloraminated water is safe for drinking and all water uses. Please refer to the sections titled Medical Information and Information for Fish Owners.

What are trihalomethanes (THMs)?

THMs are chemical compounds that form when chlorine mixes with naturally occurring organic material in water. These compounds are suspected carcinogens. The MOE and Health Canada have set a standard of 100 parts per billion (ppb)* as the safe maximum level of THMs in drinking water, based on a lifetime of consumption.

*Note: one ppb is comparable to one second in 32 years, or 1¢ in \$10,000,000.

Does using chloramine increase the cost of water?

No. The cost of using chloramine is about the same as using chlorine.

Do home water softeners remove chloramine?

Most water softeners are not designed to remove chloramine.

Does bottled water have chloramine?

Normally it does not. Bottled water could contain chloramine if the company uses water supplied by the Township as its water source.

Does the pH of water remain the same with chloramine?

Yes, the pH remains the same. The normal pH range for the Townships water is 7 – 9.

What does chloraminated water taste like?

Chloramine itself is colourless, tasteless and odourless. In comparison to chlorinated water, chloraminated water does not have a strong chlorine taste.

If chloramine is such an effective disinfectant, why is it not used in every community?

While the public often considers all drinking water to be the same, the local raw water and water distribution conditions determine the best option for each particular community. Both chlorine and chloramine have their own advantages and disadvantages. Given sufficient contact time, chloramine is as effective as chlorine in destroying bacteria. While chlorine works more quickly, it does not last as long in the water as chloramine.

Is chloramine safe for swimming pools?

YES. Your pool still requires a free-chlorine residual to delay algae and bacterial growth. Test kits measure free-chlorine residuals and can be used with confidence. Contact your local pool supply store for details.

What is the impact of chloramine on pets?

Chloramine is safe for all mammals and birds and most reptiles. Chloramine is not expected to cause any health problems for dogs or cats.

Medical Information

- **Is it safe to wash a cut or open wound with chloraminated water?**
- **Can people with kidney ailments, on low-sodium diets, or with diabetes use chloraminated water?**
- **Since chloramine should not enter the bloodstream, is it safe to drink chloraminated water?**
- **Why do kidney dialysis patients have to take special precautions?**
- **How should people with home dialysis machines remove chloramine?**

Is it safe to wash a cut or open wound with chloraminated water?

YES. Even a large amount of water can be used to clean a cut or wound because no water enters the bloodstream.

Can people with kidney ailments, on low-sodium diets, or with diabetes use chloraminated water?

YES. People with these medical conditions can use chloraminated water for cooking, drinking and bathing. ***Chloramine must be removed from water that is used for Kidney dialysis machines.***

Since chloramine should not enter the bloodstream, is it safe to drink chloraminated water?

YES. Everyone can drink water that is chloraminated because the digestive process neutralizes the chloramine before it reaches the bloodstream.

Why do kidney dialysis patients have to take special precautions?

In the dialysis process, water comes into contact with the blood across a permeable membrane. Chloramine in that water would be toxic, just as chlorine is toxic, and must be removed from water used in kidney dialysis machines. To remove chloramine, add a dechlorinating chemical to the water or use a granular activated carbon (GAC) filter.

How should people with home dialysis machines remove chloramine?

Contact your physician. He or she will recommend the appropriate type of water treatment for you.

Information for Fish Owners?

- How does chloramine affect fish?
- Do carbon filters remove chloramine?

How does chloramine affect fish?

Chloramine, like chlorine, is toxic to fish and must be removed from the water. Because chloramine does not dissipate as quickly as chlorine, special steps must be taken for its removal. Most pet stores sell dechlorinating agents and generally recommend their use. Contact your local pet supply store for details.

Do carbon filters remove chloramine?

YES. However, the carbon filters must contain high quality granular activated carbon and you must allow for sufficient contact time of one minute or more.