Providing Potable Water In A Pinch

If a water supply is tested regularly, we are usually confident that it is safe to drink. But what about when we leave the protection of inspection supplies and hike, camp or travel. In emergency situations, such as a flood, water supplies often become contaminated. In these situations, knowing how to make a small quantity of water-safe to drink can be a valuable skill.

Charles Abdalla, Penn State Specialist in Environmental Quality, offers the following guidelines.

Before treating contaminated water, filter it by pouring it through a clean cloth. Water having a cloudy appearance contains soil or other particles that can protect bacteria and other pathogens during disinfection. This step is not needed if the water is clear. Also, make sure that the containers you are using are clean.

Disinfecting water on a small scale can be done by boiling or

through chemical treatment. The best way to make sure that water is free of most biological contaminants is to boil it. Vigorous boiling for one minute will kill harmful bacteria and also destroy tiny cysts, such as those that cause giardiasis.

If boiling is not possible, chemical treatment with chlorine or iodine can be used. While chemical treatment will kill harmful bacteria, it is much less effective for the more resistant Giardia cysts.

Common household bleaches containing chlorine can be used to disinfect water. Check the label on the bottle to find out the percentage of available chlorine in the bleach. If the available chlorine is from four to six percent, add four drops of bleach to disinfect one quart of clear water. If the available chlorine is from seven to 10 percent, add only two drops. Double the number of drops if the water is cloudy. Mix the treated water thoroughly and allow it to stand for at least 30 minutes before drinking. If the water has too strong a chlorine taste, pouring it from one container to another or allowing it to stand for several hours will help improve its taste.

Iodine can be also used for treating a small amount of water for drinking. When using a two percent solution of tincture of iodine, the kind found in first-aid kits, ten drops should be added per quart of clear water. Twice that amount of iodine is needed if the water is cloudy. After thoroughly mixing, let the water stand for at least 30 minutes before drinking. This treatment method is not recommended for people who are sensitive in any way to iodine.

Commercially-prepared tablets containing chlorine or iodine made specificially for disinfecting water are also available.

Can't Drink Milk? Try Yogurt

NEWARK, Del. — Milk is a primary source of the nutrient calcium. According to University of Delaware extension food and nutrition specialist Dr. Sue Snider, not all people are able to drink milk because their bodies cannot digest lactose, a natural form of sugar in

These people may be deficient in lactase, the enzyme that breaks down the lactose. People with the deficiency often experience intestinal discomfort because the undigested milk sugar cannot be absorbed into the bloodstream.

Researchers at the University of Minnesota, however, have found that some of these individuals experience no discomfort after eating yogurt. Tests were conducted with people known to the deficient

in lactase. Similar amounts of lac tose were added to yogurt, milk and water. Participants given the yogurt had fewer cases of diarrhea and gas than those given the lactose dissolved in water or milk.

Resarchers also found that those eating the yogurt absorbed more of the lactose than those drinking the milk or water solutions. The enhanced absorption of lactose in yogurt appeared to result from the digestion of lactose by lactase released from the organism used in making yogurt, Snider says.

Yogurt is a cultured dairy product that can be made from whole, low-fat or skim milk with added nonfat dry milk, the specialist says. Most plain low-fat yogurt has some dry milk solids added to give the product stability.

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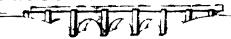
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