



Treating Your Drinking Water

Water is essential to the survival of all life, and it is especially important that you plan to have enough water with you during any recreational activity in Alaska. Always bring at least 2 one liter waterbottles per person and plan for extra water if you are cooking or camping overnight.

When your outdoor adventures call for more drinking water than you can carry with you, you may find yourself looking to natural water sources, such as streams and rivers, to collect sufficient water for cooking and drinking.

For your health and safety, ALL water collected for human consumption from Alaskan rivers and streams MUST be treated before drinking!



How do I treat water so it is safe to drink?

There are three methods for water treatment:



1) **Boil all your water for one minute before drinking.** This will kill all parasites harmful to your body. Boiling is a simple solution, but it does not remove sediments from the water and it is highly fuel consumptive.

2) **Use a water filter.** Preferably one with a fine mesh to catch tiny bacterium and parasites. Avoid filtering water with glacial silt, which will quickly clog your filter.

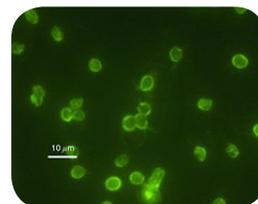


3) **Use iodine tablets.** This is an effective treatment, but it may leave an iodine taste that many find unpleasant! Powdered drink mixes with vitamin C will deactivate the iodine if added before the treatment has finished.

Untreated water can make you sick!



The most common “bug” in Alaskan waters is **giardia**, a parasite spread by mammal feces, including humans. Commonly called “beaver fever,” symptoms of giardia include diarrhea, cramping, gas, fatigue, and even weight loss. Giardia is contracted by drinking contaminated water, or even by using utensils washed in contaminated water! Giardia is treated with prescribed antibiotics, but can quickly end an outdoor trip.



Another common agent of water-borne illness is **cryptosporidium**, or “crypto”. This protozoan causes symptoms similar to giardia that show up within 2-4 days of drinking contaminated water.