

Infection Prevention & Control Advice for Nursing/Residential Home facilities, Independent Hospitals and Clinics and Domiciliary Care Agencies who may be without a water supply or those with an interrupted water supply

Hand Hygiene

Alcohol hand preparations will suffice for routine hand hygiene. However, after 4 or 5 applications of the alcohol hand preparation, hand hygiene should be performed with soap and water – in the event that there is no water supply an antiseptic soap solution and bottled water should be used. Available water should be prioritised for hand hygiene before using for showering and bathing. When staff are dealing with vomiting and/or diarrhoea, soap and water must always be used, alcohol hand preparations should not be used on this occasion.

Bedpan washers/disinfectors

In the absence of a water supply, bedpan washers/disinfectors will not function. If this is the case bedpans should be emptied in the sluice/dirty utility and flushed away with a bucket of water. The bedpan should then be washed and decontaminated with a hypochlorite (bleach) solution at a strength of 1,000ppm (parts per million).

It is advisable that this procedure is undertaken in a ventilated room with the door closed and staff should wear PPE (personal protective equipment) i.e. Gloves and aprons and a mask where appropriate.

Hand hygiene should then be performed using soap and water.

Toilets

In the absence of mains water supply, water which has been used for washing and cooking may be saved in containers and used for flushing.

Laundry

In the event that there is no water supply soiled/infected linen should be stored appropriately as per local guidelines (e.g. alginate bag and an outer bag) until the water supply issue has been resolved. If facilities are without mains water for a prolonged period of time, alternative and appropriate local arrangements should be made for laundering clothes and linens, for example an arrangement could be with another care facility which does have a mains water supply to ascertain if clothes and linen could be transferred to that facility for laundering.

Routine Cleaning

Routine cleaning should continue as normal using bottled water in the absence of a water supply. Disinfectant hard surface wipes can be used for equipment cleaning. For environmental cleaning in the event of an outbreak for example, a hypochlorite solution should be used at a strength of 1,000ppm for routine cleaning. For blood contamination or spillages, a concentration of 10,000ppm should be used. These solutions should be made up using bottled water.

Bowers

NI water will provide extra water through bowers in local areas. This water should be safe to drink if boiled first and cooled. Clean water containers should be used to transfer this water into the home or facility and the use of sterilising tablets would be appropriate to clean these containers.

Food preparation

Only bottled or bowser water should be used for drinking, food preparation and ice making. Bowser water should be boiled and cooled before use. It is safe to use unboiled water to prepare food if the cooking process involves boiling. Water from a hot tap is not suitable for drinking in any circumstance.

Flooding/Interruption to mains water supply

In the case of flooding or an interruption to the flow of mains water supply, taps should be cleaned with hot, soapy water before using for the first time after mains water has been restored and water should run for a few minutes to clear the pipes.

Bathing

Boiled and cooled bowser or bottled water should be used for bathing and brushing teeth. Alternatively, baby or sanitary wipes could be used.