

Chloramines – Frequently asked questions

Are chloramines new?

No. Many cities in Canada (including Toronto, Ottawa, Edmonton and Victoria) as well as cities in the United States have used chloramines for decades.

Are chloramines safe?

Yes. Chloraminated water is safe for routine uses we have for water today. Chloramines act as a disinfectant to eliminate disease-causing organisms that could be carried in untreated drinking water.

Why change to chloramines?

Chloramines are an effective oxidant that will improve the quality of water in the pretreatment phase. Chloramination can also help reduce the amount of chlorine used, the levels of trihalomethanes (THMs) in the water and chlorine taste and odor.

What are trihalomethanes?

THMs are chemical compounds that are formed when chlorine mixes with naturally occurring organics in water. Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM) has set a standard of 100 parts per billion as the maximum acceptable average level of THM in drinking water.

Will Meadow Lake's water meet the standard?

Yes. The Town of Meadow Lake is working to ensure Meadow Lake's water will have an annual THM concentration of less than 100 parts per billion.

Are chloramines safe for everyone?

Generally yes. However, people who need kidney dialysis must remove chloramines from water used in kidney dialysis machines.

It should be noted that chlorine, the disinfectant currently used to treat water, must also be removed from water used in kidney dialysis machines.

Why do kidney dialysis patients have to take special precautions?

Chloramines in that water would be harmful, just as chlorine is harmful, and must be removed from water used in kidney dialysis machines.

Have local hospitals been informed?

Yes. All hospitals with dialysis units have been notified of the change.

What about people with home dialysis machines?

Those people should call their doctor who can recommend appropriate water treatment.

What about people who are sensitive to chemicals?

The amount of chloramines will be extremely small -- no more than 3.0 milligrams per litre (mg/L) or three parts chloramine per million parts of water.

Is the water OK for fish aquariums?

No. Chloramine (like chlorine) is harmful to fish. However, chlorine disappears rapidly on its own. Chloramines, on the other hand, are longer-lasting and must be removed. Most pet stores have sold dechlorinating agents for years and, generally, have recommended using them. The chemicals used to remove chlorine should work just as well for chloramines.

Another alternative is boiling the water for five minutes.

Note: Letting water sit for a few days will not remove chloramines from tank or pond water. If you don't want to use a dechlorinating chemical, the next best solution is to install a high-quality granular activated carbon filter.

Does this apply to all types of fish?

Yes. Chloramines affect salt-water and freshwater fish alike.

What are the effects of ammonia on fish?

Ammonia can be harmful to fish although all fish produce some ammonia as a natural by-product. Ammonia is also released when chloramines are chemically removed. Although ammonia levels may be tolerable in individual tanks or ponds, commercial products are available at pet supply stores to remove excess ammonia. Also, biological filters, natural zeolites and pH control methods are effective in reducing the harmful effects of ammonia.

Where can I find information about dechlorinating water for a large outdoor fish pond?

Local aquarium or pond fish owner associations will have some recommendations.

Will reverse osmosis water treatment eliminate chloramines?

No. Salts are caught by the permeable membranes but chloramines pass through easily.

What about home water softeners?

No. Most water softeners are not designed to remove chloramines.

Will chloramines affect swimming pools?

No. You will still need a free-chlorine residual to retard algae and bacteria growths. Test kits measure free-chlorine residuals and can be used with confidence. Contact a pool supply store for specifics.

How about using chloraminated water on plants, vegetables or fruit trees?

Chloramines should not affect plants.

If chloramines shouldn't mix with blood, is it safe to drink water containing them?

Yes. Everyone who currently drinks tap water can drink water that's chloraminated because the digestive

process neutralizes the chloramines before they reach the bloodstream. Even kidney dialysis patients can drink, cook and bathe in chloraminated water.

Can people wash cuts, scratches or open wounds with chloraminated water?

Yes. Cleaning cuts or wounds is the same as with the current chlorinated water.

Will chloramines change the pH of water?

No. The pH level will remain the same.

For more information, Call the Water treatment Plant at 236-5831