

## **Advice for Early Childhood Education Centres with their own Drinking Water Supply**

Each licensed early childhood education centre needs to have a *potable* (and preferably *wholesome*) drinking water supply. For each use of water, the requirements outlined below:

<b>Use</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
Drinking, cooking	<i>Potable</i> (and preferably <i>wholesome</i> )
Handwashing, art activities and cleaning	Free from microbiological contamination (including bacteria, viruses and protozoa)
Toilet flushing	Not grossly contaminated

Microbiological contamination is the biggest health risk from untreated water supplies. Some waterborne microbes (germs) can cause serious illness- not just a “tummy bug”. Untreated roofwater, streamwater, and springwater are **not** considered reliable potable water supplies, because they can be easily contaminated. Similarly, unless you have scientific evidence that your bore water source is secure groundwater, untreated bore water is **not** considered potable. Chemical/mineral contamination may be an issue with some bore water supplies.

In most cases, it is better to treat the whole water supply, rather than to have different taps with different levels of treatment. However, if the centre has two different water sources (e.g. bore and roofwater) there may be alternative ways of ensuring that water used for each purpose is treated appropriately.

*Potable* is interpreted as not containing or exhibiting any determinand (contaminant) to an extent above its maximum acceptable value specified in the *Drinking Water Standards for New Zealand, 2005*. That is, it is “safe”.

*Wholesome* water is interpreted as *potable* water that does contain or exhibit any determinand that exceeds the aesthetic guideline values in the *Drinking Water Standards for New Zealand, 2005*. (That is, it tastes and looks OK!)

In most cases, early childhood education centres with their own water supply should be registered as a Community Water Supply with the Auckland Regional Public Health Service.

- To **register** your supply, please contact the Drinking Water Unit, Auckland Regional Public Health Service, ph (09) 623 4600.

The licensee also needs to monitor the supply for compliance with the *Drinking Water Standards for New Zealand, 2005*. The current requirements for small supplies should not be too expensive or time-consuming (monthly tests for bacteria called *e.coli*) Monitoring gives you confidence that treatment is working, and the supply is safe.

The *Drinking Water Standards for New Zealand, 2005* are available from [www.moh.govt.nz/water](http://www.moh.govt.nz/water). For updates on new drinking water legislation you can check the Ministry of Health website ([www.moh.govt.nz/water](http://www.moh.govt.nz/water)).

The booklets *Household Water Supplies*, *Water Collection Tanks*, and *Secure Groundwater Bores and Wells* are useful for centres with their own water supply. An excellent framework for risk management, applicable to all water supplies, is given in Appendix 1 of *How to Prepare and Develop Public Health Risk Management Plans*. Generally speaking, protozoa (cryptosporidium and giardia) are usually filtered

out, and bacteria and viruses are usually disinfected using chlorine or UV light. Chemical and mineral contaminants may be more difficult to remove.

Please contact us (ph (09) 623 4600) to register your water supply, or to clarify any aspect of the enclosed information or the *Drinking Water Standards for New Zealand*. For detailed advice about water treatment, we recommend you seek expert advice.

In an emergency (e.g. your water treatment fails), you can boil water to make it potable. However, if the water supply to the centre fails for whatever reason, please ring us immediately for advice.