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December 7, 2020

Sodium in drinking water in Oxford County

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH UPDATE FOR RESIDENTS, HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Oxford County municipal water containing sodium levels under 200 mg/L is considered safe for drinking. However, levels above 20 mg/L may be a concern for individuals on sodium-restricted diets, due to various medical conditions and illnesses. In these cases, the Medical Officer of Health is required to inform health professionals in order to assist these individuals.

This Health Advisory is to advise residents, health care professionals and others that samples taken from Oxford County’s municipal drinking water supply over the last several years indicate that sodium levels in the following communities are above the recommended level of 20 mg/L.

COMMUNITIES WITH SODIUM LEVELS ABOVE 20 mg/L	
Bright (59 mg/L)	Brownsville (62 mg/L)
Embroy (19 mg/L)	Ingersoll (48 – 61 mg/L)
Oxford South – Norwich, Otterville, Springford (18 - 51 mg/L)	Thamesford (25 mg/L)
Tillsonburg* (2 - 41 mg/L)	Woodstock** (11 - 59 mg/L)
<p>* Tillsonburg: Sodium levels may be above 20 mg/L in some parts of the municipal drinking water supply. Varies depending on the wells in use. The majority of wells are below the standard.</p> <p>** Woodstock: Sodium levels above 20 mg/L in some parts of the municipal drinking water supply only. While sodium concentrations for the majority of properties are not a concern, elevated sodium concentrations may be present occasionally in the immediate vicinity of Sutherland Park.</p> <p>Testing: Testing for sodium is carried out in each community once every five years. Oxford County’s Public Works Department, as the municipal water system operator, will provide information directly to residents who may be affected by high sodium levels. For more information visit: www.oxfordcounty.ca/ServicesforYou/WaterWastewater/Drinkingwater/Annualreports</p>	

HEALTH CONSIDERATION: SODIUM-RESTRICTED DIETS

Your body needs sodium in order to maintain blood pressure, control fluid levels, and for normal nerve and muscle function. Food, not water, is the major source of sodium in our diets. Sodium is also found in drugs such as antacids, laxatives, aspirin and cough medicines, as well as table salt. One teaspoon of table salt or sea salt contains 2,300 mg of sodium.

For people on sodium restricted diets, the amount of sodium in the water may be significant. For instance, drinking up to two litres of water per day at the levels found in some parts of Oxford County could add 40 to 168 milligrams of sodium to a person's diet.

Who is at risk?

For a healthy adult, the level of sodium in the water supply does not pose a risk to health. However, if you or members of your family have kidney disease, heart disease, high blood pressure or liver disease, and need to restrict your salt intake because of these illnesses, please ask your physician or health care professional how sodium in the water may affect your health.

The following chart compares the maximum daily intake for different sodium-restricted diets to the range of sodium present in some areas of Oxford County.

	Maximum intake of sodium allowed per day	Amount of sodium in 2L of drinking water in communities with high sodium levels
ADULTS		
Very Strict Diet	500 mg/day	40 to 168 mg/day
Strict Diet	1,000 mg/day	
Moderate Diet	2,000 mg/day	
Mild Diet	2,300 mg/day	
The recommended sodium level for children between the ages of 1 and 14 years ranges from 1,500 - 2,300 mg/day. For more information see the Health Canada guidelines at www.hc-sc.gc.ca		

Water softeners

Water softeners can add significant amounts of sodium to your drinking water. If you have a water softener, consider using a separate unsoftened water supply for cooking and drinking, or use a separate water line for drinking that bypasses the water softener. Water from a water softener should not be given to infants and should not be used to prepare infant beverages including formula and juice.

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