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HEALTH ADVISORY

July 6, 2026

High Nitrate Level in drinking water supply at Richmond Community Drinking Water System

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH UPDATE FOR CONSUMERS OF WATER AT Richmond Community Drinking Water System

Chemical water test results obtained by the Health Unit on July 6, 2026 indicate that the nitrate level for the Richmond Community Drinking Water System is **10.5 mg/L**. Under the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards, the maximum acceptable concentration (MAC) of nitrates in drinking water is 10 mg/L.

High nitrate levels in drinking water can harm young infants by causing methaemoglobinaemia or “blue baby syndrome”. This condition develops when a baby’s body changes the nitrate to nitrite, which replaces oxygen in red blood cells, reducing the ability of the blood to carry oxygen throughout the infant’s body. Infants, particularly those under 6 months of age and those up to 1 year are more susceptible than others because their stomach juices are less acidic, making it easier to change nitrate to nitrite. If an infant is affected, the skin becomes blue. If this condition is observed, seek medical help immediately. The baby is becoming asphyxiated because he or she is being deprived of oxygen. Prompt medical attention normally results in quick recovery.

If you have young children, especially infants under 1 year of age, you should obtain an alternate safe supply of drinking water for drinking. An alternate safe supply of drinking water can include:
• Water treated with Reverse Osmosis system
• Bottled water
• Municipal water
• Water that has been tested and has a nitrate level of less than 10 mg/L.

DO NOT BOIL the water and try to reduce the nitrate level. Boiling will increase the nitrate level due to evaporation of the water.

It is difficult to pinpoint sources of nitrate because there are many possibilities. These include run-off/ seepage from fertilized farmlands, municipal and industrial wastewater, garbage dumps, animal feed lots, septic tanks, urban drainage and decaying plant debris. The geological formations and directions of ground water flow influence the possibilities of nitrate contamination from a particular source.

The system operator is taking corrective action to address the elevated nitrate levels and is closely

monitoring water quality. Efforts are underway to reduce nitrate concentrations to below the MAC and maintain compliance with Ontario drinking water standards.

This advisory measure is in place until results show nitrate levels are under maximum concentration limits.

If you have questions about nitrates in your drinking water, please consult your health care professional, or call Southwestern Public Health at 1-800-922-0096.

Dr. Ninh Tran
Medical Officer of Health

Environmental Health Team
Southwestern Public Health

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