

Using Recycled Water safely

How do I know that the recycled water is safe?

The Bendigo Recycled Water Factory located at the Epsom Water Reclamation Plant in Bendigo, produces high quality 'Class A' recycled water. This recycled water is sewage effluent which goes through a number of treatment processes in accordance with the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and Department of Health (DOH) guidelines. The treatment processes are monitored closely to ensure that these guidelines and high standards are constantly adhered to.

What kind of testing is done on the recycled water?

The Bendigo Recycled Water Factory has 24 hour online monitoring equipment which monitors pH, electrical conductivity (salinity), turbidity (filter accuracy), chlorine residual, Ultra Violet (UV) intensity and temperature. If any of these parameters fall out of guideline requirements, the factory will automatically shut down to stop supply to the pipeline. The recycled water is also monitored within Spring Gully Reservoir to ensure the quality of the recycled water is consistent and low risk.

What can I use recycled water for?

The recycled water you will be supplied can be used for the following:

- Garden watering including vegetable gardens
- Toilet flushing
- General outdoor use such as car washing and dust suppression
- Fire-fighting purposes
- Water features and ornamental ponds
- Irrigation of human food crops and pasture/fodder for livestock (excluding pigs)
- Livestock drinking water (excluding pigs)

What am I not to use recycled water for?

The recycled water you will be supplied is not to be used for the following:

- Drinking
- Filling swimming pools or spas
- Cooking or kitchen purposes
- Children's water toys
- Bathing or showering
- Any and all uses involving contact with pigs

Can I drink recycled water?

Although the recycled water has been treated to very high standards, it has not been treated in accordance with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines; therefore it is not suitable for personal uses which includes drinking, cooking or bathing. If you do accidentally drink it, do not panic as the likelihood of illness is extremely low. If you accidentally drink recycled water and you experience any signs of illness please seek medical advice.

What if I accidentally drink recycled water?

All customers who have recycled water on their properties should have lilac coloured taps in order to distinguish recycled water from drinking water. If you do accidentally drink recycled water, do not panic as the likelihood of illness is extremely low. If you accidentally drink recycled water and you experience any signs of illness please seek medical advice.

Can I water my vegetable garden with recycled water?

Yes you can. It is safe to handle and eat vegetables that have been grown with 'Class A' recycled water. As a normal hygiene practice it is recommended that all vegetables be washed before eating them as there may be disease-causing micro organisms present in soils and fertilizers (for example compost or manure).

Although the recycled water is slightly saltier than your existing potable (drinking) or rural raw water supply, any effects on the plants should be minimal unless you have impermeable soil (i.e. poor soil drainage where it takes a long time for water to soak in) or if you spray recycled water onto sensitive plants (i.e. carrots, lettuce) in the heat of the day. Best practice is watering early morning (before 9am) or late evening (after 6pm in summer).

Do I need to wash my hands after being in contact with recycled water?

If you have been in direct contact with recycled water, there is no great need to wash your hands before undertaking further activities. It is advisable, however, to wash hands after gardening or agricultural activities before eating and drinking, as disease-causing micro organisms may be present in soils, fertilizers (for example compost or manure) and other irrigation sources.

Is it safe if I get sprayed with recycled water while watering the garden or washing my car?

Yes it is, because 'Class A' recycled water is the result of treatment to a high standard, it is safe to come into direct contact with - even wet clothes are safe to wear.

Is it safe for children to come into direct contact with recycled water?

Although it is safe for children to come into direct contact with the recycled water, water toys and playing under sprinklers is not considered acceptable as children can swallow water while undertaking these activities.

Why can't I fill my swimming pool or spa with recycled water?

Filling swimming pools or spas with recycled water is not considered acceptable as people can swallow significant amounts of water while in the spa or pool, and recycled water is not treated to meet Australian Drinking Water guidelines.

Is it safe to use parks and golf courses that have been irrigated with recycled water?

Yes, the high standard treatment process makes the recycled water safe for irrigation not only for public open spaces such as parks and sporting grounds, but also for irrigating human food crops, pasture and fodder for stock (excluding pigs) and non-human food crops such as flowers and turfs.

Is it safe for my pets to drink?

Yes. Due to the high standard of treatment, it is safe for pets to drink. Although it is safe for pets such as dogs, cats and stock such as cows and sheep, it is not safe for pigs due to particular sensitivities. Under current Victorian environmental regulation, pigs must not come into contact with recycled water at any time or be fed fodder and pasture grown with recycled water.

What are the charges to use recycled water?

For rural customers whose existing raw water supply is being replaced with recycled water, there is no change to the existing billing structure.

For other customers drawing recycled water directly from the Epsom-Spring Gully Recycled Water pipeline (including standpipes) there is an access fee and a volumetric charge. The access fee applies to direct connections and varies depending on the size of the meter, and the volumetric charge is 75% of the non-residential potable (drinking) water rate for the supply area. The current fees and charges schedule can be viewed on Coliban Water's website www.coliban.com.au

For further information about recycled water, please contact the Recycled Water Officer at Coliban Water on 1300 363 200.

