

# SALTWATER INTRUSION

LA WIC Staff Guidance



**SOUTHEAST  
LOUISIANA  
READY**

## »»» The Issue

- Due to low water levels in the lower Mississippi River, saltwater from the Gulf of Mexico is currently intruding upstream. This phenomenon is known as saltwater intrusion. Saltwater intrusion can affect local water supplies because many public drinking water systems in south Louisiana rely on fresh water from the river. Salt water can be unsafe to consume, especially for vulnerable populations. Tap water is often used by parents and caregivers when mixing formula (powdered or liquid concentrate) for infants.
- Tap water with higher than normal levels of sodium, chloride, and other minerals or metals could cause harm, such as hyponatremia (high levels of sodium in the blood), to formula-fed infants, and should not be consumed.



## »»» Key Messages for Families

- Due to low water levels in the Mississippi River, saltwater from the Gulf of Mexico is moving upstream and could impact the drinking water in several southeast Louisiana parishes. Plaquemines Parish has been affected by this issue since June. Water systems that will eventually be affected include St. Bernard, Orleans and Jefferson parishes. A timeline of impacts and other critical information can be viewed at [emergency.la.gov/saltwater](https://emergency.la.gov/saltwater).
- Sodium cannot be easily removed from drinking water and cannot be removed through boiling or common household filters such as Brita filters. Boiling water will not make the water safe to consume or use.
- Water systems are conducting increased water monitoring and will issue drinking water advisories about their system's water quality. Local and state authorities will notify residents when their water is affected.
- Once a drinking water advisory is issued for a family's water system, they should use bottled water, nursery water without fluoride, or distilled water to prepare powder or liquid concentrate formula.
- Bottled water will be available for WIC participants at clinics in Region 1.
- When bottled water is not available to prepare formula, use ready-to-feed (RTF) formula. RTF formula does not require any preparation with water.
- WIC families who cannot access bottled water and need to temporarily switch from powdered or liquid concentrate formula to RTF will need to call their WIC clinic to have their WIC food package and EBT card updated.

## »»» Key Messages for Staff

- Families from Region 1 may be issued RTF formula without an updated WIC-48 and without prior approval from the Regional Nutritionist until further notice from the WIC State Agency.
- If the currently prescribed exempt formula is not available in RTF form, a WIC-48 is required to switch to a different formula.
- Staff should inform the participant that WIC is unable to guarantee availability of formula, and some exempt RTF options require the clinics to order directly from the manufacturer. This could cause a delay in the participant receiving their formula.
- Staff are required to enter a note in LAWIN for RTF issuance ("RTF approved without Reg. Nut. approval due to saltwater intrusion").