

BAYHEAD WTW NORTH UIST Qs & As



What have the raised levels of aluminium in the water been and when were they detected?

Between the 19th Sept and the 27th Sept lab results have shown the levels in final water to have been between 53 and 1900 mcgs. The levels that were very high (over 1000) were short lived and peaked during a 24-hour period on 21 and 22 Sept.

Since the 27th Sept levels have been between 346 and 226.

What should the level of aluminium be?

The regulatory level PCV for the water industry is 200 mcgs.

This is set at a very precautionary (conservative) level that provides a wide margin of safety, and is intended to minimise the possibility of any adverse health effects.

Although the high levels have not recurred since the 22nd September and the situation has been improving levels have continued to fluctuate as well as remain over 200mcg which is why, when last week it became clear the situation was not improving quickly enough, these measures of not using the water for drinking or cooking have been introduced.

Until the plant at Bayhead returns to a period of stable operation and back to low levels of aluminium our advice will remain that the “**do not use for drinking and cooking**” notice should remain in place.

What are the potential adverse health effects of these levels of aluminium?

Aluminium is generally considered to be non-toxic and there is no World Health Organisation health based guideline value.

Acute health effects such as an upset stomach are not likely to occur at all, unless levels are very high, and much higher than they have been in this incident.

Some concern has been expressed over the years that longer-term chronic exposure to a lot of aluminium may be associated with some loss of memory. However, the WHO has concluded that the balance of epidemiology and physical evidence at present does not support a causal role for aluminium in Alzheimer's disease.

Long-term chronic exposure generally means exposure to high levels over periods of months and years, which is not the case in this incident.

Nevertheless on a precautionary basis it was felt important to introduce these measures of ‘Don’t drink, don’t cook’ to be able to ensure a return to good quality water and minimise any future health risk to the population of exposure over a longer period of time.

DR LOUISE SCOTT
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