

oil. Benzene has not been found to be mutagenic in bacterial assays, but it has been shown to cause chromosomal aberrations in vivo in a number of species, including humans, and to be positive in the mouse micronucleus test.

Beryllium

The primary source of beryllium compounds in water appears to be release from coal burning and other industries using beryllium. Other sources of beryllium in surface water include deposition of atmospheric beryllium and weathering of rocks and soils containing beryllium. Beryllium is not likely to be found in natural water above trace levels as a result of the insolubility of beryllium oxides and hydroxides in the normal pH range.

Reason for not establishing a guideline value	Rarely found in drinking-water at concentrations of health concern
Assessment date	2009
Principal references	IPCS (2001) <i>Beryllium and beryllium compounds</i> WHO (2009) <i>Beryllium in drinking-water</i>

As beryllium is rarely, if ever, found in drinking-water at concentrations of concern, it is not considered necessary to set a formal guideline value.

A health-based value for beryllium in drinking-water of 12 µg/l can be calculated based on an allocation of 20% of the TDI of 2 µg/kg body weight, derived from a long-term study in which dogs exhibited lesions of the small intestine, to drinking-water and assuming a 60 kg adult drinking 2 litres of water per day. This allocation is probably conservative, as the limited data on food indicate that exposure from this source is likely to be well below the TDI.

Although beryllium appears to be found in drinking-water sources and drinking-water at low concentrations, the database on occurrence is limited, and there may be specific circumstances in which concentrations can be elevated due to natural sources where the pH is either below 5 or above 8 or there is high turbidity.

Boron

Boron compounds are used in the manufacture of glass, soaps and detergents and as flame retardants. Naturally occurring boron is present in groundwater primarily as a result of leaching from rocks and soils containing borates and borosilicates. The borate content of surface water can be increased as a result of wastewater discharges, but this use has decreased significantly, and levels of boron in wastewater discharges continue to fall.

Guideline value	2.4 mg/l (2400 µg/l)
Occurrence	Concentrations vary widely and depend on the surrounding geology and wastewater discharges; for most of the world, the concentration of boron in drinking-water is judged to be below 0.5 mg/l

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TDI	0.17 mg/kg body weight, based on a BMDL ₀₅ of 10.3 mg/kg body weight per day for developmental toxicity (decreased fetal body weight in rats) and an uncertainty factor of 60 (10 for interspecies variation and 6 for intraspecies variation)
Limit of detection	0.15 µg/l by ICP-MS; 6–10 µg/l by ICP–atomic emission spectrometry (AES)
Treatment performance	Conventional water treatment (coagulation, sedimentation, filtration) does not significantly remove boron, and special methods need to be used in order to remove boron from waters with high boron concentrations. Ion exchange and reverse osmosis processes may enable substantial reduction but are likely to be prohibitively expensive. Blending with low-boron supplies may be the only economical method to reduce boron concentrations in waters where these concentrations are high.
Guideline value derivation	
• allocation to water	40% of TDI (because intake from other sources is low)
• weight	60 kg adult
• consumption	2 litres/day
Additional comments	Because it will be difficult to achieve the guideline value of 2.4 mg/l in some desalinated supplies and in areas with high natural boron levels, local regulatory and health authorities should consider a value in excess of 2.4 mg/l by assessing exposure from other sources.
Assessment date	2009
Principal reference	WHO (2009) <i>Boron in drinking-water</i>

Short- and long-term oral exposures to boric acid or borax in laboratory animals have demonstrated that the male reproductive tract is a consistent target of toxicity. Testicular lesions have been observed in rats, mice and dogs given boric acid or borax in food or drinking-water. Developmental toxicity has been demonstrated experimentally in rats, mice and rabbits. Negative results in a large number of mutagenicity assays indicate that boric acid and borax are not genotoxic. In long-term studies in mice and rats, boric acid and borax caused no increase in tumour incidence.

Bromate

Sodium and potassium bromate are powerful oxidizers used mainly in permanent wave neutralizing solutions and the dyeing of textiles using sulfur dyes. Potassium bromate has also been used as an oxidizer to mature flour during milling, in treating barley in beer making and in fish paste products, although JECFA has concluded that the use of potassium bromate in food processing is not appropriate. Bromate is not normally found in water, but can occur as a result of pollution from industrial sources, sometimes as a consequence of its presence in contaminated soil. However, the main source in drinking-water is its formation during ozonation when the bromide ion is present in water. Bromate may also be formed in hypochlorite solutions produced by electrolysis of bromide-containing salt.

Provisional guideline value	0.01 mg/l (10 µg/l)
	The guideline value is provisional because of limitations in available analytical and treatment methods.