

Water, water everywhere ... most is now safe to drink in an English village after parasite outbreak

May 19 2024



A general view of Brixham Harbour, in Brixham, Devon, Friday May 17, 2024. Most residents living near a scenic fishing village in southwestern England where a parasite in the water sickened more than 45 people were told Saturday, May 18, 2024, that they could safely drink the water again. South West Water said it lifted its boil notice for most of the 17,000 homes and businesses around the Brixham area of Devon that had been affected after cryptosporidium, a

microscopic parasite that causes diarrhea, was found in the water. Credit: Piers Mucklejohn/PA via AP

Most residents living near a scenic fishing village in southwestern England [where a parasite in the water sickened](#) more than 45 people were told Saturday that they could safely drink the water again.

South West Water said it lifted its boil notice for most of the 17,000 homes and businesses around the Brixham area of Devon that had been affected after cryptosporidium, a microscopic parasite that causes diarrhea, was found in the water.

At least 46 cases of cryptosporidiosis were confirmed and more than 100 other people reported similar symptoms, the U.K. Health Security Agency said. Symptoms can last more than two weeks.

The water company said it consulted with [public health officials](#) before lifting the boil warning for all but about 2,500 customers after rigorous testing showed the water was safe for most of the area.

"This situation has caused an immense amount of disruption, distress and anxiety. We are truly sorry this has happened," water company spokesperson Laura Flowerdew said. "The public rightly expect a safe, clean and reliable source of drinking water and on this occasion we have fallen significantly short of expectations."

The [outbreak](#) announced Wednesday was unrelated to Britain's larger ongoing water woes but emblematic of an aging system in distress.



People collect bottled water at Broadsands Car Park in Paignton, England, Friday May 17, 2024. Most residents living near a scenic fishing village in southwestern England where a parasite in the water sickened more than 45 people were told Saturday, May 18, 2024, that they could safely drink the water again. South West Water said it lifted its boil notice for most of the 17,000 homes and businesses around the Brixham area of Devon that had been affected after cryptosporidium, a microscopic parasite that causes diarrhea, was found in the water. Credit: Ben Birchall/PA via AP

Water companies have been under fire for more than a year to stop frequent sewage overflows into rivers and oceans that have literally caused a stink, sickened swimmers, polluted fishing streams and led to an outcry from the public to clean up their act.

South West Water is facing charges in Plymouth Magistrates' Court alleging 30 offenses for illegal water discharges or breaches of environmental permits between 2015 and 2021, the Environment Agency said.

Flowerdew on Friday said the outbreak may have come from a damaged air valve in a pipe that runs through a field where cows graze that is close to a reservoir.

A [primary school](#) was forced to close Thursday because it didn't have clean drinking water. The water company said it provided 386,000 [water bottles](#) to its customers.

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