

Water transition reminder for kidney dialysis patients

WAUKESHA — The city of Waukesha will transition from its current groundwater source to 100% Lake Michigan water in mid-September.

Once the transition occurs, there will be a change in the disinfection process from chlorine, currently used by Waukesha, to chloramines, used by Milwaukee. Both disinfectants are commonly used to ensure public health protection and the change should be unnoticeable. However, the switch to chloramine may affect kidney dialysis.

Waukesha Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak previously said city staff want to make sure people are aware of it and understand it's important to be in contact with their health care providers so they can find out what they need to do ahead of time.

The one difference is the disinfectant used by the city of Milwaukee versus what the city of Waukesha currently uses. Free chlorine is used in Waukesha

as a disinfectant for its distribution system which prevents any bacteria or growth in the water. Milwaukee uses a chloramine or a chlorine ammonia combination.

"They are both widely used throughout the water industry and fully accepted by federal government and regulations," Duchniak said.

There are benefits to chloramines if there is a larger system like Milwaukee has. If you are on the extreme of those systems, like Waukesha is, there is definitely a benefit to using chloramines because they last longer in the distribution system, according to Duchniak.

He added it is a benefit to Waukesha to utilize that type of disinfectant here.

"For kidney dialysis patients, there is a change for their dialysis machine and procedures. They need to understand there is chloramines in the water rather than chlorine in the water," he said.

City staff has been working with dialysis centers in

the city but they understand some residents may not be utilizing kidney dialysis machines or clinics here in Waukesha.

"It is just change in procedures. Instead of the de-chlorination you have the de-chloramination which means the chloramines are out of your water. Which means you have to get not only the chlorine but ammonia out of the water also," Duchniak said.

If your drinking water comes from the city of Waukesha Water Utility, kidney dialysis patients should contact their local kidney center, before the water transition begins, for guidance on needed modifications, if any, to dialysis machines and procedures. Let your provider know that Waukesha will be getting Milwaukee water to find out what modifications may be needed. Medical centers that perform dialysis are responsible for and familiar with removing chloramines from the water that enters the dialysis machines.