

Unusual water color, taste or odor?

Rust Colored Water

Rust particles in water (orange-brown water color) and spurts of air are caused most frequently when we shut down water mains to make repairs. In galvanized steel pipe plumbing systems (typically found in older neighborhoods and homes), air trapped in the system during a repair rapidly expands when a valve is opened, causing large quantities of rust to break loose from the plumbing system. If the rust was in or near your home's system, running the cold water for three minutes should provide clear water. If the rust was further "upstream", sometimes this problem takes days before it clears up. Aerators on your sink spigots should also be cleaned periodically to remove any accumulated rust particles.

Brown Colored Water

Brown water is often caused by disturbances to the water main, like main breaks or fire hydrant uses that stir up the sediment that has settled at the bottom of the main. While it may look unsafe, the sediment is harmless river silt particles. If you experience this problem, avoid using any water for one or two hours. If the water does not clear, call us.

Chlorine Taste & Odor

We add chlorine to our water supply to kill bacteria and other microbes. Some chlorine taste and odor may offend sensitive individuals during different times of the year. During the late spring and summer, residual levels of chlorine may be higher due to the combination of chlorine with naturally occurring plant materials in the Clifton reservoir. After September these levels usually drop - chlorine odor and taste should be less.

Earthy/Musty Taste and Odor

Earthy or musty tastes and odors are produced by algae growth increased by warm weather and sunlight. We treat the reservoir to inhibit algae, but it can still be a problem. The odor is harmless, and increases where fresh water becomes more aged, such as in a cul-de-sac, dead-ended water main or stale water areas in the home. The odor is more noticeable in hot water, particularly in a shower.

Yellow Water

Changes in water temperature can cause a seasonal "turnover" in our storage reservoir, mixing good quality water with lower quality water from the bottom of the reservoir. The lower quality water has higher concentrations of dissolved manganese and iron. Treatment of these contaminants with chlorine causes them to become visible by giving them a yellow tint. Drinking water rules label these minerals as "secondary" or "aesthetic contaminants" that can cause objectionable appearance or a metallic taste, however, they do not have any known health effects at the levels we've found. The turnover is not predictable, but we test for it and when it happens, we have added a special chemical treatment process to remove the extra contaminants by filtration.

White/Cloudy Water

White or cloudy water is usually caused by tiny air bubbles trapped in the water. The bubbles also can cause a slightly metallic taste or odor. This is harmless and usually temporary.

Rotten Egg Odor

The same "turnover" of water in the reservoir that stirs up manganese also mixes high concentrations of hydrogen sulfide – resulting in a "rotten egg" odor. The turnover is not predictable, but when it happens, we begin a special chemical treatment process to remove the extra contaminants by filtration. If the cold water smells after letting it run for 3 to 5 minutes, the odor is most likely from the water main. We have a program for flushing stale areas of the water system to help minimize odors.

Sand And Grit

Sand-like particles and grit occur in home plumbing as a result of rust particles from galvanized steel pipe and sometimes from mineral scale sloughing off the pipe wall. A steel table knife or pocketknife blade will crush rust or mineral scale, while true sand will resist crushing. Sometimes, this grit causes premature failure of faucets. It will also affect the operation of faucet aerators. If your washing machine is filling too slowly, you should replace the screen filters where the hot and cold water hoses enter the back of the machine.