

Typical Water Quality Concerns FAQ



Why does my drinking water look red, yellow, or brown?

Iron deposits from our cast iron water mains naturally settle to the bottom of the mains. A change or disruption in the flow of water—perhaps from a fire hydrant activation, a water main break, or a construction project—can cause these iron deposits to become temporarily suspended, giving the water a red, yellow, or brown color.

Although its appearance is not pleasing, the water does not pose a health risk and is safe to drink. There are, however, a couple things to avoid until the water clears:

- Do not use hot water because sediment will collect in the hot water tank.
- Do not do laundry because the iron can stain clothing.

The water should clear within a few hours. Check the water every 30 or 60 minutes by running the cold water tap located in the lowest point in your home for 2-3 minutes. Once it runs clear, flush the pipes in your home by running all cold water taps for a few minutes.

If the problem persists, a system hydrant may need to be flushed. Please call 311.

Why does my drinking water look cloudy or milky?

Cloudy or milky-looking water is most-likely caused by tiny air bubbles. This typically happens when the water changes temperature and is often observed in the fall and spring.

There are two common reasons:

- Water can absorb more air at higher water pressure. Because the water in the distribution system and your home's pipes are pressurized, when the water is poured into a drinking glass the air leaves the water in the form of bubbles.
- Water releases air bubbles when it is warmed. As water makes its way from a cold reservoir to your tap, it warms up. Cold water holds more air than warm water, so once the water leaves the tap some of the air is no longer soluble and leaves the water in the form of bubbles.

Fill a glass and let it sit for a few minutes. If the bubbles rise to the top and the cloudiness disappears, then the issue was just caused by some air bubbles.

If the water does not clear after a few minutes, please call 311.



Source: [Massachusetts Water Resources Authority](#)

Why does my water smell or taste bad?

Your water shouldn't have any discernable taste or odor.

An odor from your tap is commonly caused by unsanitary sink plumbing, garbage disposal, or nozzle screen on the sink spout, and not by the water itself. If you notice a taste or odor, first check the other taps in your house. The s-shaped pipe under your sink is especially prone to collecting debris.

Fill a glass halfway with tap water and smell the water in a separate room or try running the faucet with the drain closed. If the odor is no longer present, the source of the problem is likely the plumbing beneath your sink.

If the problem is not from the plumbing or if it persists longer than one day, contact 311. You may be asked the following questions:

- Is the taste or odor occurring at all faucets?
- When was the taste or odor first detected?
- Is the taste or odor in the hot or cold water, or both?
- How would you describe the taste or odor (e.g. earthy, musty, grassy)?
- Do neighbors have the same problem?

Where can I find more information?

Contact us! For more information or to report an issue please call 311 (612-673-3000). TTY/TDD customers dial 612-673-2157.

You can also report an issue through our online forms:

http://www.minneapolismn.gov/publicworks/water/water_water-issues