

Leaflet 1 Drinking Water Quality

Contents

Introduction

Taste and odour

Discolouration

Hardness

Lead pipes

Fluoridation

Green water (non-potable water)

Drinking Water Quality

Albion Water works closely with the [Drinking Water Inspectorate](#) to ensure that your drinking water is wholesome, safe and compliant with stringent regulations.

Many drinking water quality concerns arise in the home and we therefore provide advice, covering a wide range of issues, to follow first. You can easily check if the concern is likely to be with the public drinking water supply by asking a neighbour if they have noticed the same issue – if they haven't then we recommend you follow the advice here [Looking after water in your home](#).

If your neighbours also notice an issue, we may flush the main to resolve the problem.

If after following our advice and the steps below, you remain concerned and need any further advice you can call our customer services team on [03300 242020](#). If you believe that your drinking water is unsafe, please call our 24-hour emergency number [0800 917 5819](#).

We might arrange to visit your property to investigate the issue or take samples of drinking water from your cold kitchen tap. If a member of our team visit you, they will have an identity card that can be checked by calling [0800 917 5819](#). You can also set up a password that we can use so that you can be certain about who is visiting your home.

If we suspect at any time that your water is unsafe for consumption, you will be contacted immediately and, in this situation, we advise you on what steps should be taken, e.g. boiling water. We might also arrange for an alternative supply of water while we investigate.

If samples of drinking water are collected from your home and sent for laboratory analysis, then we will normally provide you with written details within 5 working days of the results being available

If you are dissatisfied by our response, or would prefer independent advice on drinking water quality in your home, you can contact your Environmental Health Officer at your Local Council who will be able to offer you further advice and support, or contact the Drinking Water Inspectorate.

Taste and odour

If you are concerned about an unusual or noticeable change in the taste or odour of your drinking water please follow the steps below.

Always use the cold kitchen tap to check for tastes and odours. The cold kitchen tap should be the tap closest to the point that the drinking water supply enters your property, if it isn't then use the closest.

For queries relating to your hot water supply please contact an approved plumber, go to watersafe.org.uk.

If you need any further advice you can call our customer services team on **03300 242020**, if you believe that your water is unsafe please call our 24 hour emergency number **0800 917 5819**.

Metallic or bitter tastes

Metallic, bitter or sharp tastes can be caused by metal dissolving in your water pipes. This may happen after the installation of new metal pipework and should reduce as the pipes become coated with a protective layer or limescale or metal oxide which prevents the metal dissolving.

You can reduce the metallic or bitter tastes by running your tap before you use the water – remember to collect the water that you have flushed from your system and use it to water plants.

Earthy or musty tastes (sometimes eggy or sulphurous)

The taste and odour of drinking water can be confused by the influence of the sink and waste trap. If you experience earthy or musty smells try pouring a glass of water checking it away from the sink. If this eliminates the problem, then deep cleaning the sink and drain should solve the problem.

Another cause can be a low turnover of water in the mains, particularly if you are close to the end of a main, or if you live in a rural, or sparsely populated area. Ask your neighbours if they have also noticed an issue and we can flush the main to resolve the problem.

TCP or medicinal tastes or smells

A TCP or medicinal taste or smell could be caused by your appliances.

If you only hot drinks are affected then it may be caused by your kettle. It can be caused by the plastic components of your kettle reacting with the water (even metal kettles will have plastic components). Try boiling your water in a saucepan, and if this resolves the problem then

you might need to consider replacing the kettle. If you are using a new kettle the problem should settle down after use.

If you are noticing the taste and smell in your cold water then it may be an issue with washers in your taps or the hose of another appliance that uses water, such as the dishwasher or washing machine.

New washers in taps and worn washers can react with the chlorine in water. You can replace them with non-phenolic washers or other WRAS (Water Regulations Advisory Scheme) approved washers. If the problem is not limited to your kitchen tap you might need to look at replacing the washers on your internal stop tap.

If the problem persists you can look at the hoses that connect other appliances to your water supply (for example washing machines, dishwashers and fridges with ice makers). Isolate the supply to the appliance and detach the connecting hose, then run your taps to flush through the water that may have been in contact with the hoses, leave the hose disconnected for a few hours, ideally overnight, and then check if the taste has gone).

If it has then you should install check valves to the hoses to prevent appliances affecting the quality of your drinking water. You can buy check valves from DIY stores and they simply screw into the top of the hose to prevent any water flowing back into your kitchen tap.

Chlorine

Chlorine is added at water treatment works to ensure that your drinking water is safe to drink. Some people can be very sensitive to the smell and taste of chlorine.

If the smell is noticeable first thing in the morning or in the early evening you can try running the water for a few minutes before you use it – remember to use the water you flush to water plants.

If the smell and taste becomes an issue you can fill a jug with water and place it in your fridge which will reduce the chlorine taste and smell. The water should not be kept for more than 24 hours to ensure the water remains fresh and quality doesn't deteriorate.

If it doesn't clear after a few days please calling our customer services team on **03300 242020**.

Chlorine is used to disinfect water and is not harmful, the levels at customers taps is typically less than 1 part per million.

Woody

A woody taste or smell, like pencil wood can be caused by alkathene pipe. These are some of the first black plastic pipes that were commonly used in the 1960s and 1970s as supply pipes.

If you run your tap for a few minutes before using the water the taste and smell should disappear – remember to use the water you flush to water plants.

An approved plumber can help identify if your pipes are made from alkathene and advise how they can be replaced. You can find an approved plumber at **watersafe.org.uk**.

Appearance

Black, brown, orange, red or yellow coloured water

Drinking Water with a black, brown, orange, red or yellow appearance is likely to be caused by a disturbance of the natural sediment that has built up in water mains, usually because of a burst or fire-hydrant use. Running your main tap to clear is the best course of action.

If it doesn't clear after 30 minutes and is affecting multiple properties we may need to flush the main.

If the problem is long term and is not affecting your neighbours then it is likely that it is caused by your supply pipes or internal plumbing (your pipes, taps, tap fittings or pipe fittings). To investigate the issue use an approved plumber found at watersafe.org.uk

It is best not to drink discoloured water, while it is unlikely to be harmful the taste will be unpleasant.

White or cloudy water

A white or cloudy colour normally caused by tiny air bubbles suspended in water. To check if this is the case, fill a glass with water from the cold kitchen tap and then allow it to stand the water should gradually clear from the bottom up. The air bubbles are caused during works on mains and temporary.

If the white or cloudy appearance persists this please contact our customer services team on **03300 242020**.

Blue or brightly coloured water

Blue, pink or other brightly coloured water coming from one or more of your taps is unusual and indicates a problem with your plumbing. Typically associated with back siphoning from toilets which have coloured disinfectant blocks used in the cistern.

If you notice this contact us as soon as possible, it is likely that you will need to find an approved plumber (watersafe.org.uk) who can install the appropriate check valves to resolve the issue.

On rare occasions a blue colouration to the water may also be caused by high levels of copper in your drinking water. This problem normally only occurs where there is relatively new copper plumbing.

The blue colour should disappear when the cold kitchen tap is run. However, if the colour persists then please contact us.

Water Hardness

Water hardness depends on where your drinking water supply is sourced from. Sources typically from deep below ground means you may have hard water. This is because the ground may have high chalk levels (Calcium Carbonate) and as the water passes through the rocks it dissolves into the water making the water hard.

Hard water is nothing to worry about and evidence suggests that it has many health benefits. Calcium is essential for healthy growth and is found in many foods.

To see whether the water in your area is hard please refer to our [website](#).

Limescale is a common issue with hard water but there are many products that you can use to prevent the build-up of lime scale such as wire scale collectors in kettles and limescale removing products to keep taps free from limescale build up.

The salt levels in some dishwashers can be adjusted to suit the hardness of the area. Check the manufacturers' guidelines for which units to use.

It's important to remember that limescale is not dangerous. Limescale can build up in your kettle if and it can also react with the natural tannins in tea and coffee causing a brown scum, to reduce/prevent this:

- Use a teapot to make your tea instead of a mug
- Try putting milk in first and try to use semi skimmed instead of whole milk
- Use tea leaves instead of a tea bag

Lead pipes

If water travels through lead pipes to reach your home, then trace amounts of lead can end up in your drinking water.

You might not think that drinking water with very small amounts of lead could cause too much of a problem but over time, it will build up in your body and become harmful. Children are particularly at risk from the health effects of lead, so if you're having a child or already have a family you may wish to take steps to replace lead pipes to protect your household.

Your is more likely to have lead pipework if it was built before 1970. Houses before 1987 might also have pipes joined using lead solder which can also affect the quality of your drinking water.

How to check for lead pipes

1. Find the pipe leading to your internal stop tap and the kitchen tap (it's usually under your kitchen sink or in the downstairs toilet).
2. Unpainted lead pipes will be dark grey or black, and their joints will look swollen.
3. Scrape the pipes gently with a coin. If they're lead, shiny silver strips will appear.
4. Tapping a lead pipe with a metal object will produce a dull thud rather than a clear ringing.

How to reduce the amount of lead in water

- Use cold tap water for drinking or cooking. Hot tap water will dissolve more lead than cold water. Only use cold water when mixing infant formula.
- Run the tap for a couple of minutes. If water has stood in your pipes for a few hours or more, run the taps before you use water for drinking or cooking.

Who's responsible for which pipes?

We look after the pipes in the road leading up to the boundary of your property, but the pipes inside that boundary, including the plumbing inside your home, are your responsibility.

If you replace your pipes, and let us know, we'll make sure the pipe leading to the boundary of your home isn't lead either. If you rent, and you're worried about lead, we suggest you talk to your landlord.

Please make sure you're only using approved materials and a qualified plumber – to find an approved plumber visit [watersafe.org.uk](https://www.watersafe.org.uk).

Fluoridation

Fluoride is a mineral found naturally in food and water at trace levels. As water percolates through the rocks and soil, and collects in the aquifer deep below ground and will have a concentration of fluoride will vary reflecting the natural geology near the source of your drinking water supply.

Fluoride is only added to a water supply when local Health Authorities instruct water companies to do so. They must have a public consultation if they wish to change the levels of fluoride in a water supply. The UK regulatory limit for fluoride in drinking water is 1.5 milligram per litre (mg/l). On average the level is only raised to 1.0 milligram per litre (mg/l).

Health Authorities that require the fluoridation pay for it and is not part of your water bill.

Green water

If you live in Rissington or Oaklands Hamlet, and are part of the new development, you may know that the homes benefit from a dual supply infrastructure, where the toilets and outside taps can be supplied from a source of recycled water (treated recycled effluent and/or harvested rainwater) once commissioned.

Whilst bacteriologically safe, the dual supply infrastructure means that this Green (environmentally friendly) Water supply is not connected to the drinking water supply. Green water from the outside tap is not to be used for drinking, brushing your teeth or bathing, it is treated to a standard for uses such as toilet flushing, garden irrigation and vehicle washing.

If you have any concerns about the quality of your green water supply please contact us.

All new properties connected to green water systems have been checked for the correct plumbing of both drinking water and green water systems prior to first occupation. It is important you use a qualified plumber and that they are aware of the dual supply infrastructure within your home - Please make sure you're only using approved materials and a qualified plumber – to find an approved plumber visit [watersafe.org.uk](https://www.watersafe.org.uk).