

1 Discoloured Water

Including Cloudy/White, Brown/Yellow/Orange Water or Blue Water

Our customers rarely receive discoloured water, but it can be disconcerting if you do.

What causes discolouration?

Discolouration can be caused when there is a change in the direction or speed of flow of the water. This can occur when there is high customer demand, a burst on a water main, when valves are opened or closed or the sudden use of a lot of water for firefighting.

Discolouration is usually the disturbance of inert iron or chalk deposits present in the water mains. It may also be caused by the condition of the pipework connecting your house to the water main, or the condition of your internal plumbing.

The most common descriptions customers use when reporting it are 'cloudy water' or 'brown water'.

A slight change in colour may also be observed if a customer receives water from a different water treatment works.

What is cloudy water?

White cloudy water is caused by air or chalk. Air bubbles will rise from the bottom to the top of a glass, leaving clear water once dissipated. Chalk can be identified as fine white particles which slowly settle from the top to the bottom of a glass.

Is it safe?

Air bubbles and chalk particles are not harmful. But the appearance of the water may not be up to the usual standard.

What causes chalky water?

As most of our water comes from chalk boreholes, it is naturally 'hard' because it contains significant amounts of naturally occurring calcium salts, or chalk (calcium carbonate).

Past water treatment processes were not as efficient as they are now. The treatment process allowed small chalk particles to go through the system. These entered the water supply network and in some areas over time, have settled at the bottom of water mains.

If the chalk is disturbed due to a change in the network, as previously described, some customers may experience cloudy 'chalky' water.

Dealing with chalky water

If you do not want to drink, or use the chalky water in other ways, run the tap briefly to see if it clears. If it doesn't, fill some containers and leave it to settle. We will normally resolve the problem the same day.

How does air get in the water?

When a pipe bursts, or work is taking place on water mains, small amounts of air may become trapped in the pipework and give the water a milky appearance. This is harmless and normally short-lived.

Air can also be introduced through customer's internal plumbing, hot water systems or mixer taps.

Dealing with air in your water

If it troubles you, run the tap to see if it clears or fill some containers and leave it to dissipate.

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Brown/yellow/orange water

Brown, yellow or orange particles from the corrosion of old iron water mains may sometimes appear in your water.

What causes it?

As with chalky water, disturbances to the water mains network can sometimes cause the sudden appearance of brown, yellow or orange water. But your own plumbing can also be a source of discolouration.

Is it harmful?

Tiny particles of iron suspended in your water are not harmful to your health. But the taste may not be up to the usual standard and it may stain clothing.

What we are doing about it

We carry out work in known affected areas to rehabilitate water mains. We have flushing programmes to remove deposits and we replace or re-line old worn out pipes. This investment in the water supply network is to ensure that iron sediment problems are kept to a minimum.

Is it from your pipework?

When water is left standing for some time in an ageing galvanized iron supply pipe, it may pick up rust and corrosion.

If the discolouration is only evident at your property, and not your neighbours, (unless you are on a shared supply) and is generally only evident first thing in the morning, or when water has been left standing for a number of days, this would suggest the cause is your own pipework.

If the discolouration is experienced at only

certain taps within your property, it may indicate deterioration of your internal plumbing.

Blue water

Loo Block - A poorly installed toilet cistern or a faulty flush mechanism can allow water containing loo block to back siphon into the plumbing system, causing the water to appear bright blue.

If you experience bright blue water, contact us immediately for further advice.

Copper - The presence of copper from internal pipework can cause the water to appear a light green blue colour.

Change in Water Source

A slight change in colour, blue/green or light brown, may be observed if a customer receives water from a different water treatment works. Water from our Bough Beech treatment works, which is a surface water works, has a slightly higher colour to that from our treatment works that take water from our underground aquifers. A change in colour is not harmful to health.

What can you do?

Identify the cause by comparing the water from your cold kitchen tap (mains fed) with water from a neighbour's cold kitchen tap. If the discolouration is isolated to your tap it may be an internal plumbing issue. If your neighbour is also affected it may be the supplying main.

In either case, run the affected tap for a few minutes.

If the problem persists contact our Customer Service team for further advice.