

1 Taste and odour

Including metallic, Chlorine, TCP and earthy or musty water

Our water is high quality but occasionally you may notice a change in taste or odour. This could be caused by a number of factors and here we explain what they may be and what you can do to remedy them.

Firstly, **check with neighbours to see if they have noticed an unusual taste or odour.** If they have not, the source may be within your property due to one of the causes listed below.

Does it only occur first thing in the morning or in the first draw of water or Have you recently had plumbing work in your home?

The water may be picking up the taste or odour as it sits for long periods of time in contact with internal pipework and possibly new plumbing materials.

Examples of this include:

metallic or bitter tastes from new copper pipework,

plastic tastes from plastic pipework,

rubbery tastes from tap washers, hoses and appliance fittings.

In these cases, flushing the tap before drawing water for use may help to improve the situation.

Have you moved?

If you have recently moved from another water supply area you may notice a slight change in the taste or odour of your water due to a different source of supply. It could also be due to something as simple as more or less chlorine or your new property being a different distance away from the treatment works.

Chlorine

It is essential that drinking water is wholesome and contains no harmful bacteria. To help achieve this we are legally required to disinfect water. Chlorine is a very effective disinfectant which has been used for over 100 years. It is added in small amounts at our treatment works. It is also used in higher concentrations to disinfect swimming pools.

Why can I smell or taste chlorine in my water?

The amount of chlorine added to the water at each individual treatment works is constant, but there may be times when its presence may be more noticeable.

When might this happen?

Chlorine may be more noticeable when the water travels quicker between the treatment works and your property due to increased water demand. Increased water demand often occurs first thing in the morning and in the early evening when more people tend to use more water.

What can you do?

Cool water in a covered jug in the fridge for a while before drinking it. This water should not be stored for longer than 24hours.

Is it just in hot drinks?

This could suggest the kettle is the source. Try boiling water in a saucepan to see if the taste or odour still occurs. New kettles should

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be boiled and the water discarded at least twice before being used for hot drinks. Tastes and odours from tap washers or plastic pipework would also be more noticeable in warm water.

A disinfectant, chemical or 'TCP' taste and odour can occur when chlorine reacts with tap washers or plastic pipework in appliances such as washing machines, dishwashers and fridges with icemakers.

How to check if the taste or odour is due to your washing machine, dishwasher or other plumbed in appliance:

Taking each appliance in turn:

- Turn off the valve which controls water flow into the appliance.
- Run the tap used for drinking water to clear the pipes.
- Leave the valve closed for a few hours.
- If the smell or taste is no longer present the hose connecting the appliance is the cause.

What to do next:

Fit or replace a check valve (non-return valve) on the end of the machine hose where it connects to the household pipework. Also check the condition of the hose and replace if necessary.

We can supply non-return valves for washing machine and dishwasher connections on request. They are easily fitted and prevent the taste from the hose reaching the mains tap.

If possible, always isolate the hoses from the supply when the appliance is not in use.

Ensure that flexible hoses and tap washers are Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS) approved, as they do not react with chlorine. Visit www.wras.co.uk for more information and advice.

Earthy or musty taste

High numbers of micro-organisms can cause this taste in water.

Where do they come from?

Micro-organisms occur naturally in all water and their numbers can increase in domestic systems if the water has a low usage or has been allowed to stagnate. This can also occur in warmer conditions such as during the summer and if internal hot water pipes located too close to the cold water pipes.

How can I eradicate it?

If the property has been unoccupied for some time, flush the cold kitchen tap for around five minutes before drawing water for drinking.

Lag your pipes if your hot water pipes are too close to your cold water pipes.

Regularly clean household taps thoroughly using a mild household disinfectant.

Drain type odour

Often the source of this type of odour is air displacing water from the sink plughole, rather than the mains water itself.

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How can I test that?

Fill a glass then move out of the kitchen to smell the water.

What can I do?

The use of a domestic drain cleaner may help to improve the situation.

Further guidance on ensuring fresh tasting drinking water:

Only drink water from the mains kitchen tap. Do not use water from the hot water system or water from your bathroom taps for drinking or cooking. This water usually comes from storage tanks in the loft so is not as fresh as water coming directly from the mains. If they are not properly maintained, these tanks can also introduce contaminants into the water.

If you have been away, run the kitchen tap to clear water that has been standing in the pipe before drinking. This will avoid metallic and musty tastes from the pipe work and possibly discoloured water.

A bowlful of water is usually sufficient to clear up to 40 meters of pipework and this water could be used for watering plants.

Don't drink water from water softeners, because it contains high levels of salt. Always have a tap with un-softened water for cooking and drinking. Incorrectly installed water softeners can cause salty tastes and contaminate the drinking water supply.

What if these suggestions do not work?

Please contact our Customer Services team as we may be able to help you find out if there is something wrong with your household plumbing and provide further advice on preventing tastes or smells in your water. Alternatively, get advice from a WaterSafe approved plumber, a list of which can be found on the Watersafe website www.watersafe.org.uk

For further advice and top tips check out the water industry guide 'Looking after water in your home'. Download at: www.seswater.co.uk/WaterInYourHome

If you cannot drink your tap water or you notice a smell or taste that is not explained by any of the above please contact our Customer Services team for further advice.