

Fact Sheet: Problems and solutions

To ensure a high quality water supply, your drinking water is filtered and disinfected to a standard that meets the National Health Medical and Research Council's *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (1996)* and the *Victorian Safe Drinking Water Act 2003*. While Western Water provides a water supply that meets these requirements, some customers occasionally experience water quality problems, which may be attributed to some of the reasons below.

Cold water

Brown water

If your water supply is brown, yellow or muddy in appearance and contains small particles, it may be as a result of corroding metal pipes and fittings or sediment and naturally occurring organic matter in the water mains.

To help prevent this problem, Western Water conducts regular maintenance programs to clean the reticulation pipes using 'air scouring' and 'flushing' to clear any sediment within the mains system.

Addressing the problem

Conducting this simple test may soon determine the reason for the brown water.

Run the affected tap for approximately one minute into a bucket. If the water eventually runs clear, the problem is most likely to be caused by rusting metal pipes or fittings on your property. In this case, flushing internal taps can clear the sediment. Residents should consult a licensed plumber in this instance.

If the water does not clear or significantly improve, the problem most likely exists in the water supply system and not within the property's pipes. This problem may be caused by loose particles built up over time and deposited at various locations throughout the water supply system or by disturbances caused by repairs, construction activity or fluctuating flows. Please contact Western Water if you are concerned or if the problem persists.

When undertaking this test, remember to use the water collected in the bucket on your plants or garden instead of tipping it down the drain.

White water

If the water supply is white, milky or cloudy, it is more often than not caused by many tiny air bubbles in the water. This can be a result of water being trapped in the pipes after repair works or from aerator devices having been fitted to taps.

In some cases the cause of white, cloudy water may be mild corrosion of internal piping. Refer to *Blue Water* below for further information.

Addressing the problem

Hold a glass of tap water up to the light. If you notice tiny bubbles clearing from the bottom of the glass to the top, aeration of the water is most likely the cause.

Flushing the garden tap for a few minutes can help to alleviate the problem. Again, remember to do this into a bucket and use the water on the garden.

Blue water

Blue or greenish water generally means that copper corrosion is occurring in the internal pipe system. This type of water discoloration is also often accompanied by a metallic taste and can have associated health risks.

Low levels of copper are essential for health, however water with a blue or green colour generally means that the copper levels are too high and should not be consumed or used for food preparation.

Addressing the problem

First thing in the morning, run the tap at full flow into a clean white container until you have collected approximately two to three litres of water. Leave it stand for a few seconds. If the water remains blue/green or you see blue particles within the water, the copper levels may be too high.

If you are experiencing blue/green water problems, contact Western Water and ask to speak to a member of our water quality team.

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Hot water

If you are experiencing difficulties with your hot water supply, it is more often than not a problem with your hot water service. If you notice small particles in your hot water, there may be a build up of solids in the system or your hot water service may be corroded and need replacing.

Air bubbles in hot water are generally a result of your hot water thermostat being set at a temperature that is too high.

In both instances a registered plumber should be contacted to arrange an inspection. An accredited Green Plumber[®] can assist in determining the most efficient products and appliances to meet your needs. Locate your nearest Green Plumber[®] at www.greenplumbers.com.au or contact 1800 133 871.

Hard water

Is your soap not lathering? Are you experiencing blocked shower roses, blackened aluminium cooking utensils and/or white deposits on your sink or inside your dishwasher?

Addressing the problem

Hard water, or excessive amounts of calcium and magnesium in the water, can cause problems such as the above. This is most often a problem experienced with new cement lined water mains and occurs mainly in new subdivisions where mains have been recently laid. Under these circumstances, the problem is generally only temporary until the pipes stabilise.

Elevated levels of calcium can also be found in bore water supplies. Calcium problems caused by bores can be a longer-term problem and may need to be further addressed.

If you would like further assistance, please contact Western Water's water quality team.

Chlorine

The taste and/or smell of chlorine in your water supply is a normal response to the small amounts of chlorine added to the water supply as a disinfectant to combat disease-causing organisms. The level of chlorine taste and odour in each household is different and is dependant on where your house is situated from the chlorine dosing point and the times of dosing.

Addressing the problem

Western Water adds chlorine to your water supply according to the *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines*. However, if you believe that the taste or smell of chlorine in the water from your tap is a problem, please contact Western Water's water quality team.

Further information

If you are concerned about any aspect of the quality of your water supply, please contact Western Water on 1300 650 425.