

AVR Taste and Odor Problems FAQ's

Discolored Water

If your water changes color suddenly – no matter what color it becomes – it could indicate a public health concern. Do not use the water and immediately contact AVRWC. Usually when water looks dirty, it's because of changes in the way that the water delivery system is being operated. When the direction that water flows in the pipe changes--for maintenance work on a water main, when a fire hydrant is broken in a car accident, or there is a break in a water main--materials at the bottom of the pipes get stirred up. Usually, the water looks dirty for a short time, and you shouldn't drink it until it looks clear.

One way to speed the dirty water out of your pipes is to run all of your faucets for a few minutes. If the water is still not clear, then do the same thing again every half hour or so. The problem should go away within two to four hours. If it doesn't, call AVRWC.

Avoid running hot water if the cold water is discolored. This will prevent filling your hot water tank with discolored water. If you are washing clothes, you can minimize the potential for staining by stopping the washer and waiting until clear water is available to finish.

Milky white or cloudy water is almost always caused by tiny air bubbles. If your water is white, fill a clear glass with water and set it on the counter. If the water starts to clear at the bottom of the glass first, the cloudy or white appearance is a natural occurrence of entrained air in the water. It is not a health threat and should clear in less than five minutes. If the water does not clear up, contact AVRWC.

Green or blue water is usually caused by corrosion of copper plumbing. If corrosion is occurring, dripping water will leave a bluish-green stain on porcelain fixtures. Certain metals, such as copper, that leach into drinking water from corrosion may pose a health concern. The problem could be in the home's plumbing. AVRWC's water quality has been measured to be non-corrosive. If you suspect corrosion, contact AVRWC or a licensed plumber.

Black or dark brown water is usually due to manganese or other sediment and should clear up without further action when the sediment settles in the water main. Manganese does not pose a threat to human health. If it doesn't clear after a few minutes of flushing your cold water faucets and toilets, wait about an hour and try again. If it still isn't clear, contact AVRWC.

Brown, red, orange or yellow water is usually caused by iron rust. Rusty water can be caused by galvanized iron, steel or cast iron pipes either in a home or business, or an old utility water main. While unpleasant and potentially damaging to clothes and fixtures, iron in drinking water is not a known human health concern.

Getting rid of problems with colored water can be accomplished by you alone or with the help of a plumber if the problem is with your plumbing or water heater. Otherwise you will need to speak with AVRWC.

Here are some simple questions that may tell you whether the problem is on your end or not:

- Is the water colored when you first turn on the tap in the morning or after not using it for a while?
- Does the water run clear after a few minutes?
- Are only some of your taps affected?
- Are you the only one in the neighborhood with the problem?
- Is it only the hot water that is colored?

If you answered yes to any of the first four questions, then the problem is probably with your plumbing.

When your water tastes or smells funny, the problem might be in the water or it might not!

You see, odors may actually be coming from your sink drain where bacteria grow on hair, soap, food and other things that get trapped. Gases in the drain that smell get stirred up when water pours into the pipe. Odor can also come from bacteria growing in water heaters--usually ones that have been turned off for a while or have the thermostat set too low.

The list below tells where many odd tastes and smells come from and how to get rid of them.

Chlorine (or bleach)

Chlorine is added to tap water to make sure that any harmful bacteria in the water are killed. When you can taste or smell a bit of chlorine, your water has been properly treated.

An easy way to get rid of the chlorine taste and smell is to let water sit in a glass for a few minutes. Then, put the water in a covered container and chill it in the refrigerator. Cold water tastes and smells better than water at room temperature.

Earthy or musty

Algae, which are plants that live in rivers, lakes, reservoirs and other bodies of water, naturally make substances that can give your water an earthy or musty smell. Another reason your water may seem to have this smell is because of bacteria that can grow in your drain when things like hair, soap and food get trapped.

Rotten eggs or sulfur

This smell can occur when the source of the water is underground. The smell is from a chemical made by bacteria and is not harmful in the small amounts found in water. The same smell can also be made by your water heater or bacteria that grow on hair, soap and food in your drain.

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