

Water Facts

5. Taste and Odour



Taste and Odour

Why does my drinking water taste and smell?

Each water supply has its own unique taste and odour. This is partly due to the different chemical composition of water according to location. Differences in the geology and environment the water originates from, the processes used to treat it and the material and condition of the network of tanks, pipes and plumbing it travels through all contribute to the general taste, odour and appearance of the water you drink. Weather and temperature can also impact taste and odour, with more biological growth causing taste and odours problems when the weather is warm, this gives seasonal variations.

Why does my water have a salty or chemical taste?

If you are experiencing a salty or chemical taste to your water it could be due to the presence of a point of use device such as a softener or filter connected to your internal plumbing. If incorrectly installed or not maintained according to the manufacturers instructions, these devices can pose a risk of backflow or breakthrough of media into your drinking water supply. If you have a problem with a salty or chemical taste to your tap water please check to see if you have a softener, filter or other point of use device attached to your plumbing.

If you do have one of these devices fitted we suggest you get an WaterSafe approved plumber to check that the device has been fitted and maintained correctly.

Why does my water taste like a pencil?

Black alkathene pipes were used in the 1960's and 1970's as pipes for supplying water. When water is in contact with these pipes for an extended period of time it can pick up a taste which is similar to that of a pencil. Flushing your taps regularly will reduce this taste.

Why does my water smell like petrol or diesel?

Fuel odours are most commonly due to a spill of heating oil, petrol or diesel. Where fuel is leaked onto ground it can permeate through the soil and into plastic water pipes. You should contact Leaf Water and the local authority immediately if you suspect a spill or leak of fuel has occurred.

Sometime the smell can transfer into the water from the local environment so the first thing you should do is to make sure there hasn't been any fuel tipped down your sink or a drain near to your tap. If you fill a glass with water and immediately take it into another room and the fuel smell is no longer present then the issue is likely to be with the sink or the drains, which should be cleaned.

If the odour persists please contact Leaf Water and we will investigate the source of the problem.

Why does my water have a metallic or bitter taste?

Sometimes your water may have a metallic or bitter taste. This can occur when water comes into contact with copper, iron or galvanised pipes, tanks or fittings for long periods of time. This can be more noticeable when the water has been warmed. If you flush your tap before use you should remove any water that has been sat in you pipe work in contact with metallic pipes and fittings. This should remove the taste.

Why does my water smell medicinal or antiseptic?

The presence of phenol, chlorophenols or iodinated trihalomethanes in the water supply can give a medicinal odour. The presence of these compounds can come from a number of sources. It is often associated with the reaction of the organic content of the raw water and the chlorination process leading to the formation of these compounds as a by-product.

Chemical reactions can also occur between chlorine and phenols from kettles, rubber or plastic components within your domestic plumbing system. The taste and smell may be stronger if the water has been boiled or left to stand in a glass. This taste is not harmful at the levels usually seen in tap water but can be very unpleasant.

Why does my water smell earthy or musty or moldy?

There are a number of aquatic organisms that whilst posing a low risk to public health can produce unwanted tastes and odours. Actinomycetes, blue-green algae and cyanobacteria are organisms that generate compounds such as geosmin and 2-methylisoborneol (MIB) which impart a an earthy and musty odour to the water.

Musty and earthy taste and odours can also develop where water has been left to stand for a long time or has been warmed in sections of plumbing with low flows. The taste is caused by harmless naturally occurring bacteria or fungi which can grow, especially on rubber fittings. Running your taps for a few minutes should remove any stale water and remove the problem.



Why does my water smell fishy?

Fishy odours are caused by the presence of diatoms and chrysophytes which are a type of algae, in the raw source water. The presence of a fishy odour normally follows a bloom of algae or diatoms in lakes and reservoirs. Under normal circumstances the treatment process will remove the taste and odour before it get to customers.

Will water from other taps in the house taste and smell the same?

You should only use water from a direct mains fed tap for drinking purposes. Drinking water from the hot tap is not recommended as it can contain high levels of metals, such as copper, which makes the water taste astringent. Using the cold water taps in bathrooms and washrooms is also not recommended for drinking as it may be from a tank that is not suitable for drinking water purposes.

Why does my water smell of rotten eggs?

If your water smells of rotten eggs it could be due to the presence of hydrogen sulphide. This is sometimes found in groundwaters and some parts of the distribution network which have low or no flow, where there is a lack of oxygen and the presence of specific bacteria that reduce the sulphate present to sulphide.

If you fill a glass with water and take it into another room and the stagnant or rotten smell is no longer present then the issue is likely to be with the sink or the drains, which should be cleaned or unblocked. If the smell is still present away from the sink this could indicate an issue with your plumbing or the wider water supply, in this instances you should contact Leaf Water and we will investigate the source of the problem.

Do you monitor the taste and odour of the water you supply?

Peoples sensitivity to tastes and odours also varies, which means that some may notice a slight taste or odour which others may not. For this reason when we monitor for taste and odour we use a panel of specially trained laboratory staff to analyse samples of water from your taps. We collect these samples at random properties at a frequency determine by The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations.

To find out more about your internal plumbing and how to can impact the taste and odour of your water, please [click here](#) to visit the WaterSafe website.

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