

Water Facts

3. Discolouration



Discolouration

Why is my water discoloured?

Sometimes your water may become discoloured in appearance and may even contain visible particles. This can be caused by a variety of reasons. Whilst the Leaf Water distribution network is made up of new clean pipework and fittings, it may sometimes be connected to an older network of iron pipes managed by another water company. These older systems of underground reservoirs and pipes can break down causing sediment including iron and manganese to accumulate.

This sediment can mobilise when there is an unusual change in flow in the network. An unusual flow can be caused by activities such as essential maintenance, a burst pipe, firefighting and/or illegal use of the network. Once mobilised, the sediment can move into the Leaf Water network causing the water to appear discoloured at customers taps. This discolouration can vary in colour and may contain particulate matter.

White Water

In hard water areas the disturbance of the network can result in the presence of white particles of chalk being displaced from scale on the inside of pipes and fittings. Very small air bubbles that give the water a milky or cloudy appearance may also be present. Both sources of white discolouration can be distinguished by a simple test. Fill a clean glass with water from the tap and leave it to stand for a couple of minutes. If the discolouration is caused by air, the microbubbles will gradually clear from the bottom up.

Black & Dark Brown Water

In certain areas where present in the natural source water, manganese may occasionally cause your water to contain black or dark brown flakes and/or particles. Like iron, this will normally occur when pipe scale and sediments are disturbed. Manganese can also appear as tiny dark purple pin spots on laundry.

Red, Brown & Orange Water

A red, brown or orange colour in water is typically caused by iron from sediment that has built up over time in older cast iron water mains. This sediment can be disturbed, suspended, and mobilised when there are changes in flow in the network, causing the particles to flow to dead ends within the pipe network and to customer taps.

Blue / Green Water

A blue or green discolouration can be caused by copper from the inside of storage cylinders or household pipes. Several possible reasons for this are known including poor earth leakage connections, pH, stagnation of new pipework, and high-pressure boiler settings.

Natural Colour

Water can also display a colour due to the presence of natural organic matter. The presence of humic and fulvic acids, iron, manganese, and other metals in environmental waters can influence the colour of the drinking water you receive. Whilst most colour in the environmental water is removed during the treatment process some residual colour may remain.

What should I do if I have discoloured water?

There are a number of things you can do to help to identify the cause of the problem, reduce the impact of the discolouration and to improve the quality of the water at your tap.

Identifying the problem

Try to establish where the problem is occurring. Is the discoloration occurring at the kitchen tap only or is it occurring at other taps in the house? Is the problem associated with the cold-water tap only, hot water tap or both?

Sometimes scales can form on the inside of the tap and some of this scale can dislodge causing particles to present in your water. Hot water taps are more prone to scale formation, they are all often attached to internal tanks that may accumulate scale and sediment. Water companies generally don't sample hot water supplies, as these are the responsibility of the property owner.

Try running your taps for 30 minutes. This should flush through any sediment trapped in your supply pipe and turnover the water in your internal pipework. Remember you can always collect this water in bowl or another vessel and use it in the garden.

Check your stop tap to see if its position has been changed recently (e.g., has it been opened or closed) or if it is leaking. A change in position of this valve could cause your water supply to contain air and appear milky or cause scale to be dislodged from pipe surfaces and transferred into your water.

Talk to your neighbours to see if they are experiencing the same problem. If the problem is occurring elsewhere, it is unlikely it is due to your plumbing and is more likely to be an issue with our network or the upstream water company's network.

Collect a sample of the discoloured water from your kitchen tap in a clean transparent bottle or container. This will allow our samplers to inspect the problem when they visit your property. This is of particular importance if the problem is transient (e.g., comes and goes).



What can I do to try and stop any further discolouration?

- Clean your taps with a toothbrush and a strong disinfectant, removing and cleaning any filters or aerators that might be in place.
- Flush your taps for 30 minutes to remove any sediment that may have travelled into your supply pipe and internal plumbing.
- Look in any tanks that you have internally in your property, to see if there is sediment present. If there is sediment present try to clean it out as this may be the source of the problem. If you need help with this, please click on the following link, which will take you to a list of approved plumbers, <https://www.watersafe.org.uk/>
- Ensure any softeners or filters that are plumbed into your internal plumbing have been maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Some of these devices can accumulate scales that can then be released into the water supply. Other devices contain media that if left long enough can sometimes break down and escape into the water supply.

What will Leaf Water do to fix the problem?

If the discolouration lasts for longer than 24 hours, we will come to your property and investigate. This will involve us taking a sample and carrying out an inspection of your plumbing to ensure it is compliant. We will also investigate to see if the water supply across the local area is experiencing the same problem.

If we establish there is a problem in the network, we will flush our network to try and remove any sediment that is present.

Where we believe the problem has originated from the upstream water company, we will liaise with them to find out how they intend to stop the issue.

If you experience a prolonged period of discoloured water of greater than 24 hours, please contact us.

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