

## Aesthetics

### Taste and Odor

#### 1. **Why does my drinking water taste or smell “funny”? Will this smelly water make me sick?**

The three most common reasons for bad tasting or smelling water are:

- A funny taste can come from the disinfectant used to kill germs.
- A rotten-egg odor in some groundwater is caused by a nontoxic (in small amounts), smelly chemical – hydrogen sulfide – dissolved in the water.
- As algae and tiny fungi grow in surface water sources, they give off nontoxic, smelly chemicals that can cause unpleasant tastes in drinking water.

None of the contaminants that could affect your health can be tasted in drinking water. You should report any sudden change in taste or smell in your drinking water to your water supplier.

#### 2. **What can I do if my drinking water tastes “funny”?** Four suggestions are:

- Store some drinking water in a clear glass container in the refrigerator (warm drinking water has more taste than cold drinking water). Although some plastic bottles are okay for storing drinking water in the refrigerator, some types of plastic will cause a taste in water. If you have trouble, use a different kind of plastic.
- Use an electric mixer or blender to beat or blend the drinking water for five minutes. This mixing will remove some of the bad taste but not all of it. Remember that to be smelled, the chemicals that cause the smell must leave the water, get into the air, and enter your nose. When you beat or blend the water, you hasten the chemicals leaving the water and get rid of some of the odor-causing chemicals prior to drinking the water. Then there are fewer chemicals to smell when you do drink.
- Some people object to the chlorine taste in their drinking water. Boiling tap water for five minutes should remove most of the disinfectant, if not all of it. After the water cools, refrigerate it. Remember that once disinfectant is removed, the water must be treated like any other food. Keep it covered and use it as quickly as possible.
- Adding 1 or 2 teaspoons of lemon juice to refrigerated drinking water may result in a pleasant-tasting drink.

If the problem is a rotten-egg odor, you may wish to consider a piece of home treatment equipment that will remove hydrogen sulfide, a nontoxic (in small amounts) but offensive chemical that causes the problem. If you have a water softener that is on both the hot and cold water, chlorine will react with the softening materials inside the softener, and the chlorine will be removed. Thus, you may not have a chlorine taste, even though chlorine is added by the water supplier.

## Appearance

### **3. Drinking water often looks cloudy when first taken from a faucet and then it clears up. Why is that?**

The cloudy water is caused by tiny air bubbles in the water similar to the gas bubbles in beer and carbonated soft drinks. After a while, the bubbles rise to the top and are gone. This type of cloudiness occurs more often in the winter, when the drinking water is cold.

Cloudy water, also known as white water, is caused by air bubbles in the water. It is completely harmless.

It usually happens when it is very cold outside because the solubility of air in water increases as water pressure increases and/or water temperature decreases.

Cold water holds more air than warm water.

In the winter, water travels from the reservoir which is very cold and warms up during its travel to your tap. The air that is present is no longer soluble, and comes out of solution.

In addition, once water from our reservoir enters the transmission and distribution pipes, the water is pressurized. Water under pressure holds more air than water that is not pressurized.

Once the water comes out of your tap, the water is no longer under pressure and the air comes out of solution as bubbles (similar to a carbonated soft drink). The best thing to do is let it sit in an open container until the bubbles naturally disappear.

### **4. My drinking water is reddish or brown. What causes this?**

The reddish-brown color is nontoxic. It can stain clothing in the wash, and it can look bad.

Drinking water pipes – in the street, leading to your home, or in your home - may be rusting, creating rusty-brown water. Also, your hot water tank may be rusting. Letting the water run a while will often clear the water (save the rusty water for plants).