

# Guide to Common Water Quality Concerns

**Which of the following best describes your water quality concerns?**

**If the particles are very small in size and oily or sooty in texture** - They are probably from

the inside of a flexible hose. These hoses are made of black rubber but they are covered with a braided stainless steel mesh. Over time, the chlorine or chloramine in the water causes the rubber to break down. These hoses are located under the sink connecting the water supply to the faucet, or at the water heater connecting it to the water supply. To stop this problem replace the hose with one of the new styles that have a water disinfection resistant lining (clearly advertised on the label) or change to a different style of hose that is not made of black rubber.

**If the particles are small, irregular in size and shape, very hard, and may include**

**particles of different colors** as well - They consist of mostly iron and are not a health hazard but they can be a nuisance if they clog your washing machine screens, shower heads, and/or the screens at the ends of your faucets (called aerators). If the water is clear with these particles in it, they probably came from the inside of your pipes.

**The particles are small, round beads that are uniform in size, shape and color** - Can also

be water softener resin beads. Inside a water softener are many small, round beads. The mechanism that keeps the beads in the tank can break, releasing them into your water. These beads vary in size and color depending on the manufacturer; however, two commonly used beads are very small and are white or tan in color. If you see that the particles are uniform in size, shape, and color and you have a water softener; call your service agent for repairs.

## **Milky White:**

Milky white water, also commonly described as cloudy, hazy, soapy, or foamy, is almost always caused by air in the water. One of the many properties of water is its ability to dissolve gases-including air. Sometimes the air comes back out of the water in the form of many tiny bubbles; this gives the water a milky white appearance. To see if the white color in the water is due to air, fill a clear glass with water and set it on the counter. Observe the glass of water for 2 or 3 minutes. If the white color is due to air, the water will begin to clear at the bottom of the glass first and then gradually will clear all the way to the top. This is a natural phenomenon and is completely normal; the water is safe to use.

### **Musty, Moldy, or Earthy:**

The most common cause of this type of problem is bacteria growing in the drain. As the bacteria grow and multiply, they produce gases which can smell musty or moldy. It is natural to assume the bad odor is coming from the water because you only smell it when you turn the water on. However there is nothing wrong with the water, you just need to disinfect the drain.

### **Smells like Chlorine:**

There are two common causes for a chlorinous, bleachy, chemical, or medicinal taste or odor in the water; the addition of chlorine to the water supply, or the interaction of that chlorine with a build-up of organic material in your plumbing system. The first step to identifying and solving the problem is to determine where the problem is coming from. If the problem occurs in only one or several - but not all - of the water faucets inside your home or business, and the problem goes away after running your water for several minutes, the cause is somewhere in your plumbing system. If this is the case, you can eliminate the problem by disinfecting your drains with bleach to kill any odor-causing bacteria. You can also remove the aerator on your faucets and disinfect those as well.

### **Salty:**

A salty taste in the water is usually caused by naturally occurring sodium, magnesium, or potassium. The salty taste will often be very mild and diluted if present. It is not harmful to your health to drink this water. In fact, many dissolved solids are beneficial to your health.

Another possible cause of salty water is a water softener. This taste will be much more salty than the natural salt compounds dissolved in the source water. When the internal seals of the valve leak in your water softener, salty water can enter the cold water lines during the regeneration cycle of your water softener. This often occurs between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. once or twice a week. The extremely salty taste will still be present in the morning when you brush your teeth or make coffee. The salty water can be removed by running the water for 1 minute. If the salty water does not clear within 5 minutes, a more serious problem may be present. Contact your water softener manufacturer for details.