

## Why is my drinking water discolored?

(See various descriptions listed below)

- **White or cloudy water:** Cloudy or milky water is typically caused by air bubbles in the water. This condition is not a public health concern. Cloudy water occurs more often in the winter months when drinking water is cold. This is because colder water holds more air. When the water warms within the house, the air escapes. The cloudiness is temporary and clears quickly after water is drawn from the tap. Cloudy water could also be an indication that construction work is being performed on New Jersey American Water's pipelines within its distribution system. Air can enter the pipeline in the system, causing bubbles to show in your tap water. Air in water is temporary and should be present for a short period of time. **Recommendations:** Let the water stand until it clears. If the water clears from the bottom of the glass toward the top, the condition is caused by air. Go to the farthest or highest tap from the point where the water enters the home and let the cold water run for a few minutes to help the air bubbles escape.
- **Blue water:** The use of blue disinfectant in your toilet might cause discoloration of your tap water, particularly if the water supply to your home was recently turned off. This might create conditions in which water from the toilet tank was siphoned into the plumbing of your house. **Recommendations:** Do not drink this water. These disinfectants contain chemicals that may pose health hazards if ingested or touched. Flush your plumbing by opening each tap until the water runs clear.
- **Green water:** Standing water sometimes has a greenish cast to it. Fluorescent lights will make your water appear green, as will tiny traces of copper leached from the pipes in your home. Greenish water is most commonly associated with seasonal blooms of algae in the surface water supply. When this occurs, New Jersey American Water adjusts its water treatment process to remove algae when it is present in its source water. **Recommendation:** No immediate action. If discoloration persists, please contact us.
- **Brown or yellow water from either tap on the FIRST DRAW:** The internal plumbing of your house may be the culprit if discolored water only appears for a minute or two after your tap is turned on. When the zinc coating on the inside of galvanized iron pipe begins to wear thin, water becomes discolored as it comes in contact with bare iron. The longer the water sits in the pipes, the worse the discoloration will be. That's why you are most likely to notice the problem first thing in the morning or when you have just returned from school or work. After running your tap for a few minutes, clean water from your water heater or water main will replace the discolored water. Since iron is an essential nutrient, this condition poses no health hazard. If the discoloration bothers you, however, flush the tap until the water becomes clear, saving the water for iron-loving plants.
- **Brown or yellow water from either tap, CONSTANTLY:** Discolored water can be the result of controlled and uncontrolled events in the distribution system, including main breaks and use of hydrants for firefighting, water main flushing procedures, as well as contractor and department of public works use. When these events occur sediment in water mains sometimes get stirred up due to the changes in the flow of water in the mains. Though these events are temporary and in most cases harmless, these sediments might cause your water to turn brown, yellow or red, and can stain your laundry. Try running the cold water in your bathtub or at the lowest level of your house for 3 to 5 minutes or until it becomes clear. Discolored water due to sediments such as these poses no health threat, but as precaution avoid drinking the discolored water and for aesthetic reasons refrain from doing laundry until the water clears up.
- **Brown or yellow water from hot tap only:** If the discoloration is detected only in your hot water supply, it is likely an indication of an issue with your hot water heater. It is recommended that you turn off your hot water heater and allow it to cool. Once cool, safely

drain and flush your unit. Then fill and turn your unit on to determine if the problem persists. You should consult your owner's manual for instructions and warnings regarding this task or contact a licensed plumber.

- **Crystals:** Crystals or sediment left behind after water evaporates might be calcium carbonate. Calcium carbonate poses no health hazard. This is a naturally-occurring mineral, identical to the calcium found in your bones and in most calcium supplements. If these deposits appear green, blue or brown, they might have been colored by tiny amounts of the metals found in your water pipes. **Recommendations:** Carbonate deposits can be dissolved with white vinegar. Dishwasher deposits can be minimized by using a commercial conditioner, by using liquid detergents and by using the "air-dry" instead of the "power-dry" setting on your dishwasher, which bakes the carbonates onto glassware.

## Why does my water smell like rotten eggs or sewage?

Sometimes customers report that their tap water smells septic, swampy moldy or like sewage or sewer gas, or sometimes sulfur or rotten eggs. These odors are often caused by gases forming in the household drain. These gases are formed by bacteria which live on food, soap, hair and other organic matter in the drain. These gases are heavier than air and remain in the drain until the water is turned on. As the water runs down the drain, the gases are expelled into the atmosphere around the sink. It is natural to associate these odors with the water because they are observed only when the water is turned on. In this case, the odor is not in the water, it is simply the water pushing the gas out of the drain. This can be verified by taking a glass of water from the tap and walking away to another area to smell the glass of water. If it still smells, please contact our Customer Service Center at 1-800-652-6987. If you determine it is the drain, to eliminate this type odor, the bacteria must be killed by disinfecting the drain. Effective disinfection can be achieved by following these six steps. Caution: do not mix any drain cleaners or detergents with bleach; certain combinations can create toxic fumes.

- Run the cold water for about 15 seconds into the drain that is to be disinfected, then turn the water off.
- Pour approximately one to two cups of liquid chlorine bleach (laundry bleach) down the drain (or drains) where the odor is present. Pour the bleach slowly around the edges of the drain so that it runs down the sides of the drain. Caution: bleach may cause eye damage, skin irritation, and may damage clothing - BE CAREFUL!
- If the odor is coming from a sink with a garbage disposal, turn the disposal on for a few seconds while the bleach is being poured. This will disperse the bleach around the inside of the disposal. Caution: bleach may cause eye damage, skin irritation, and may damage clothing - take care to avoid splashing for the few seconds the disposal is turned on.
- Allow the bleach to remain undisturbed in the drain for about 10 minutes. Caution: prolonged contact with metals may cause pitting and/or discoloration.
- After 10 minutes, run the hot water into the drain for a minute or two to flush out the bleach. If a garbage disposal was disinfected, thoroughly flush it as well.
- This procedure may need to be repeated if the odor returns.

If the odor is detected only in your hot water supply, it may be an indication that there is an issue with your hot water heater. A sulfurous or rotten egg-like odor in the hot water is caused by bacteria growing in the water heater. This usually happens when the water heater is turned off while on vacation, when the hot water has not been used for a long time or when the temperature setting on the heater is set too low. The bacteria in the water heater are not a health threat; however, they must

be eliminated to stop the odor problem. You should consult your owner's manual or contact a licensed plumber.

## My drinking water often looks cloudy when first taken from a faucet and then it clears. Why is that?

The cloudy water is caused by tiny air bubbles in the water similar to the gas bubbles in soda. After a while, the bubbles rise to the top and are gone, this cloudiness occurs more often in winter when the drinking water is cold and the home, along with its plumbing is heated

## Why does water sometimes taste/smell funny?

If you recently moved from an area where the water contained very few naturally occurring minerals, or you are accustomed to certain type of source water, such as a well or surface water supply, your new water may taste different due to the minerals it contains. The taste of domestic drinking water varies with its source. It could be that you're simply not used to the new taste yet.

## How can I improve the taste of my water?

The taste of water can be improved simply by refrigerating your drinking water in a pitcher or container. To remove any chlorine taste or odors simply shake the covered container and allow it to sit in the refrigerator over night. The chlorine will dissipate

## Is there lead in my water?

Test results of the water quality at our customer taps and ongoing analysis of our sources have shown that the water supplied by New Jersey American Water contains no detectable lead. Our source water contains no lead. If there are lead-soldered copper pipes or brass faucets in your home, these may be acting as a source of lead in your water. The brass in most faucets (even chrome-plated faucets may be brass underneath) contains between 5% and 8% lead. To eliminate the risk of lead exposure from such faucets, take these simple precautions:

- **Flush Your Tap:** When water stands in lead soldered pipes or brass fixtures for several hours or more, lead may dissolve into drinking water. Whenever the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than six hours, lead that may be present may be significantly reduced by running the water from the tap, usually for about a minute, before using it for drinking or cooking. Conserve water whenever possible by using the first flush to water the plants.
- **Use Cold Water for Cooking:** Avoid cooking with water from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve lead more quickly than cold water. If hot water is needed, water can be drawn from the cold tap and heated on the stove or in the microwave.
- **Check Home Wiring:** Have an electrician check the house wiring. If grounding wires from electrical systems are attached to household plumbing, corrosion and lead exposure may be greater.