



Clean Tap, Clean Water

Maintaining high-quality drinking water in your home



Where to get more information

- Contact your water provider or utility for more information
- US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Water Health Series and Water on Tap (www.epa.gov/safewater)
- EPA's WaterSense for helpful information on water-efficient products for the home (www.epa.gov/watersense)
- American Water Works Association's (AWWA's) consumer website, DrinkTap.org (drinktap.org)
- AWWA's brochure on household backflow prevention, *Backflow prevention is a two-way proposition*
- Canadian Institute of Plumbing and Heating has a consumer website. www.ciph.com/becausewatermatters

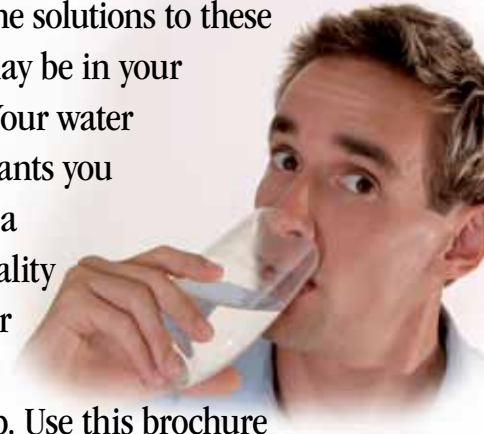


American Water Works
Association

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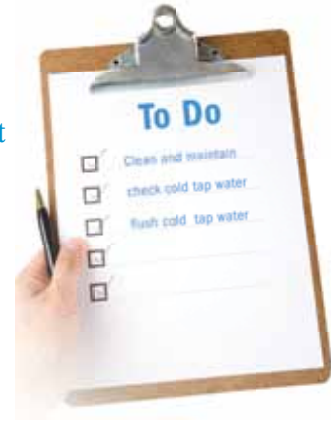


The next time you fill a glass with tap water, take a close look at the faucet and sink. Is the sink area clean? Are there stains on the fixtures? Does the tap water have an unusual smell or color? The solutions to these issues may be in your hands. Your water utility wants you to enjoy a high-quality tap water through every tap. Use this brochure yourself, or use it to work with a licensed plumber, to inspect your faucets and water use areas, such as sinks used to tap drinking water and for food preparation, to find areas for improvement.



Top faucet tips for homeowners

1. Install faucets that are certified to be “lead-free” or contain no lead.
2. Clean faucet aerators and strainers regularly.
3. Clean and disinfect sinks and faucets regularly.
4. Keep sink drains unclogged and clear of materials so that the drains work properly.
5. Use cold tap water for drinking and preparing food.
6. A good time to collect fresh drinking water to chill in the refrigerator is after a lot of household water use, such as laundry and dishwashing.
7. Remove aerators and flush cold water taps (open the faucets) after household plumbing work or when water has not been used for several days.
8. Only connect water filters and other devices intended for drinking water to household faucets. Do not connect hoses or other devices to faucets for non-drinking water purposes.
9. Keep hazardous chemicals or unsanitary materials away from faucets and sinks used for drinking water or food preparation.
10. Maintain water treatment systems as recommended by the manufacturer.



How do you know if your faucet or sink may be causing a problem?

The most common signs that your faucet or sink is affecting the quality of your drinking water are discolored water, sink stains, a buildup of particles, unusual odors or tastes, and a reduced flow of water.

The kitchen sink

The cleanliness of the kitchen sink is important because it is where you get water for drinking and cooking. Chemicals and bacteria can splash and accumulate on the faucet and aerator. Hand washing, soap scum buildup, and the handling of raw meats and vegetables can contaminate your sink. The sink's surfaces need to be cleaned and disinfected regularly.



Sink drains

Drains that are not well maintained can give rise to sewer and sulfur (rotten egg) odors. Clogged drains can lead to unclean sinks and backed up water in which bacteria can grow and contaminate the faucet and the foods being prepared around the sink. Pink and black colored biological slime growth can build up around drains. Disinfect and clean the drains and the area around the drains. Flush regularly with hot water.



Faucets, screens and aerators

Aerators are located on the tip of faucets and can collect particles such as from lead plumbing materials, sediment and minerals. Low flow from the faucet may be one sign of this. Remove and clean the aerators or screens on a regular basis. When installing new faucets and fixtures, be sure to select models that are certified “lead-free” or have no lead.



If particles are found in the faucet’s screen and they float on water, they could be pieces of plastic from the hot water heater’s dip tube, which is the component that brings cold water to the bottom of the heater’s tank. Have a plumber check the water heater for debris accumulated in the tank. Faucet gaskets can break down and cause black, oily slime or particles. If this is found, replace the faucet’s gasket with a higher-quality product.

White scaling or hard deposits on faucets and shower-heads may be caused by hard water or water with high levels of calcium carbonate. You can clean these fixtures with vinegar or use water softening to reduce the calcium carbonate levels for the hot water system. Pink or black slime in the showerhead should be cleaned out when it becomes noticeable because this could be biological growth.



Water treatment devices

Point-of-use water treatment systems, installed at the tap or on the water line under the sink counter, must be installed properly and maintained as recommended by the manufacturer.

A smell of rotten eggs can be a sign of bacteria in the filters or treatment system. The system can also become clogged over time. The water treatment device may need



replacing or cleaning. If your refrigerator has a built-in ice maker, chances are it has a small filter on the water supply line, and this filter needs to be maintained by regular checking and cleaning or replacement.

One last point

Use properly maintained and dedicated glassware for drinking water. Store water in clean covered containers in the refrigerator. Make sure that ice stays fresh and clean. You serve a key role in ensuring that the safe and good quality drinking water provided to your house by your water utility is maintained through every tap.