

COMMON UNPLEASANT COLORS, TASTES, AND ODORS IN WATER

Various colors, tastes, and odors are present in water and sometimes can be traced to a specific water quality condition through analytical testing. Although most undesirable colors, tastes, and odors found in drinking water are rarely harmful to ingest, they do impart aesthetic conditions, which most people choose to correct with various water treatment techniques.

<u>Parameter</u>	<u>Noticeable Effect</u>
Hardness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- soap scum on clean dishes and fixtures- white material in ice cubes, on pots/pans- large amounts of soap needed for cleaning
Iron	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- color of water is red or brown- stained fixtures or clothes- metallic Taste
Iron Bacteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- reddish-brown slime, typically in toilet tank- stained fixtures or clothes
Hydrogen Sulfide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- rotten egg odor; more apparent in hot water- magnesium rod (in water heater): black or graying fixtures or clothes, musty and rotten egg odor

How can these problems be corrected?

Unfortunately, the causes of bad color, taste, and odor problems are so numerous, it is impossible to suggest a single treatment that would effectively eliminate the problem. It may be necessary to consult a water treatment/conditioning company to determine the best strategy of removal of the undesired parameter.

It is suggested that you have your water well tested for one of the above parameters to confirm the cause of the problem. Many laboratories can do testing; contact the Environmental Health Division for testing information available at the Kalamazoo County and State laboratories and/or laboratory costs.

Hardness and Iron

A simple solution for hardness and iron levels exceeding satisfactory levels is the installation of a water softener unit. If iron levels exceed 0.5 mg/L, it may also be necessary to install a type of in-line iron filter.

Iron Bacteria and Hydrogen Sulfide

A temporary solution is to have your water well and water supply piping chlorinated by a licensed well drilling contractor. The installation of a charcoal type filter may be needed if either of the problems re-occurs. Furthermore, check the type of rod in your water heater. Most water heaters contain a magnesium rod placed in the tank by the manufacturer to prevent internal water heater corrosion. Over time, gases may be released from this rod. Replacing the magnesium rod with an aluminum one or removing it completely may correct the odor problem. Be aware that removal may void the manufacture's warranty on the water heater.

Note: The above information is limited for general use. We advise you to reference additional sources for your particular water quality issue.