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Water Quality

Frequently Asked Questions About Water Quality

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Have a question we haven't answered here? Call or Water Quality Hotline at (925) 688-8156 or send us an [e-mail](#).

[Read this document in Spanish.](#)

Where does my tap water come from?

The Contra Costa Water District (CCWD) serves 550,000 people in Central and East Contra Costa County. CCWD sells untreated water to Diablo Water District (Oakley), Antioch, Pittsburg, Golden State Water Company (Bay Point), and Martinez. CCWD also treats water and distributes it to Clayton, Clyde, Concord, Pacheco, Port Costa, and parts of Martinez, Pleasant Hill and Walnut Creek. All water provided by CCWD comes from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The water enters the system at intakes located at Discovery Bay and Knightsen and is conveyed via the 48-mile Contra Costa Canal to six water treatment plants in the CCWD service area. At the plants, the water is cleaned and disinfected and distributed to homes and businesses via underground pipes.

Is CCWD tap water safe to drink?

Yes, absolutely. The water coming out of your household faucet (tap) is safe to drink — and good for you. State and county health agencies, and your water utility make sure that your tap water is safe for consumption. There are also laws and additional state and federal agencies that help keep harmful things out of drinking water sources. California has very strict regulations for the quality of tap water and CCWD has an excellent record for delivering water that is as good as or better than required. If for some reason your water did not meet the health and safety regulations, you would be notified immediately.

Each of us also has a responsibility to take care of the drinking water on our property. For example, if you use a water filter, make sure you change the filter often so bacteria don't grow inside and spoil the water. Clean out your older plumbing or drains properly so that your water doesn't collect odd smells, tastes, and odors.

Should I buy bottled water or water at vending machines or water stores?

Water that is bottled or sold in vending machines or water stores costs up to a thousand times more per gallon than tap water. It is not necessarily any safer to drink. Every source of water, whether it is tap water or some type of bottled water, has to meet very strict health requirements.

It's important to be an informed consumer if you choose to drink something other than tap water. If you purchase water that is sold in vending machines or water stores, be sure that their treatment systems are properly serviced and maintained. This means, for example, that filters have to be cleaned often. Find out the source of the water — if it's truly a mountain spring or just the same household tap water run through a special filter.

And, if you have health concerns, check to see how the water is treated. Ask what specific contaminants the treatment process removes.

What is done to purify the water before it comes out of the tap?

CCWD water comes from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and is treated at six different water treatment plants before being piped to customers. The plants use a process called *conventional treatment* to clean and disinfect the water. First, the larger materials, such as dirt, pebbles and debris are screened out or settled to the bottom. Then the water is mixed with treatment chemicals that cause the smaller particles to clump together and settle to the bottom. The water is then disinfected with ozone, chlorine or chloramines to kill any bacteria. The water then goes through sand and carbon filter beds leaving it clean and clear. The water is checked throughout the process and the distribution system to make sure that it meets all regulations.

[Look here for more information on chloramines and CCWD water.](#)

Look here for information on CCWD's [Bollman](#) and [Randall-Bold](#) water treatment plants.

Is there lead in the tap water?

There might be lead in your water if you have a brass or bronze faucet or live in an older house or apartment that used lead solder (the material that joins copper pipes) in the plumbing. Brass and bronze both contain lead. Lead solder has been banned since 1986, which means that lead from inside plumbing shouldn't be a problem in newer houses and apartments. Water utilities have been replacing lead connections in their water delivery systems and follow regulations that help stop lead from getting into tap water.

The chance of having a lot of lead is most high when your first turn on the tap. That's because the water has been in contact with the faucet, pipe, and fittings. Just let the water run for a few minutes. That will flush the water that may have

higher levels of lead from your pipes. It is also recommended that you clean out the aeration screens on all indoor faucets at least once a month to remove any debris that may contain lead.

[For more on lead in CCWD water, look here.](#)

Is there fluoride in my tap water?

Fluoride occurs naturally in sources of tap water. Many water utilities add more fluoride to their water. Drinking water with the right amount of fluoride has been shown to reduce the risk of cavities, especially for children. The State of California requires all water agencies that serve more than 10,000 homes and businesses to fluoridate their water. CCWD fluoridates drinking water at its two treatment plants. The Randall-Bold Water Treatment Plant located in Oakley serves Diablo Water District (Oakley) and parts of Antioch and Brentwood. The Bollman Water Treatment Plant located in Concord serves Clayton, Clyde, Concord, Pacheco, Port Costa, and parts of Martinez, Pleasant Hill and Walnut Creek. The cities of Antioch, Martinez, Pittsburg, and Diablo Water District (Oakley) also fluoridate their water. The Golden State Water Company that serves Bay Point does not fluoridate its drinking water.

[For more on fluoride and CCWD water, look here.](#)

Can pregnant women drink tap water?

If you are pregnant and have any questions about drinking water from the tap, talk to your doctor.

Can people with HIV/AIDS or weakened immune systems drink tap water?

Water utilities must meet over 90 different drinking water requirements for tap water to keep people healthy. People with severely weakened immune systems are not always protected by these standards because they are based on reducing risks for people in good health. People with severely weakened immune systems should talk to their doctor about possible alternatives to tap water.

Why does my water sometimes taste or smell funny?

When your water tastes or smells funny, the problem might be in the water or it might not! Odors may actually be coming from your sink drain where bacteria grow on things that get trapped in the drain. Odor can also come from bacteria growing in water heaters — usually ones that have been turned off for awhile or have the thermostat set too low. Here are some ways to get rid of odd tastes or smells.

Chlorine: Chlorine is added to tap water to make sure that any harmful germs are killed. An easy way to get rid of the chlorine taste and smell is to let water sit in a glass for a few minutes. Then, put the water in a covered container and chill it in the refrigerator. Cold water tastes and smells better than water at room temperature.

Smells from the drain: To disinfect your drain take these steps. (Do NOT mix any drain cleaners or detergents with bleach; some combinations can create poisonous fumes!)

1. Run the cold water for 15 seconds then turn it off.
2. Pour one to two cups of liquid laundry bleach down the drain(s) that smell. Pour the bleach slowly around the edges of the drain so that it runs down the sides. Be careful when you handle the bleach because it can irritate skin and damage clothing.
3. If the smell is coming from a sink with a garbage disposal, turn the disposal on while the bleach is poured. This will spread the bleach around.
4. Let the bleach sit in the drain for about 10 minutes — no longer.
5. After 10 minutes, run the hot water for a few minutes to flush the bleach. Run water down the garbage disposal drain for the same amount of time.
6. Repeat these steps if again if necessary.

Why does my water sometimes look dirty, cloudy or have a funny color?

From the time your drinking water is purified at a treatment plant until it arrives at your tap, it may pick up things along the way that change the way it looks. Sometimes this happens as close as your home's own plumbing.

Cloudy water: Water is cloudy when air gets in and makes tiny bubbles. The bubbles are harmless and will disappear if you let the water sit in a glass for a few minutes.

Dirty water: Usually when water looks dirty, it's because of changes in the way that the water delivery system is being operated. When the direction that water flows in the pipe is changed — for maintenance work on a water main, when a fire hydrant is broken in a car accident, or there is a break in a water main — materials at the bottom of the pipes get stirred up. Usually, the water looks dirty for a short time and you shouldn't drink it until it looks clear. One way to speed the dirty water out of your own pipes is to run *cold* water through all of your faucets for a few minutes. If the water is still not clear, then do the same thing again every half hour or so. The problem should go away within two to four hours. If it doesn't, call your respective water utility at the number listed below.

Orange, red, brown or yellow water: Rust can turn water orange, red, brown or yellow. Rust gets into the water from two places — your water utility's pipes or your own plumbing. To find out if the colored water is related to a plumbing problem on your property or your water heater, fill a large white bowl or bucket with water from the hose bib or faucet closest to the your water meter. Let the water run for two full minutes and then fill the bucket or bowl with water. If it is clear, then the problem is most likely related to the inside plumbing or water heater. If not, you should contact your respective water utility at the number below.

How can I find out more about what's in my water?

Every year your water utility publishes and mails to all customers an annual water quality report. The free report gives the results of the tests it does in order to make sure your water meets federal and state drinking water regulations. The report also explains where your water comes from and includes other useful information. [Click here to see the report online.](#)

[Click here to see monthly reports on CCWD water quality.](#)

- CCWD — (925) 688-8156
- City of Antioch — (925) 779-7024
- City of Martinez — (925) 372-3587
- City of Pittsburg — (925) 439-6966
- Diablo Water District (Oakley) — (925) 625-2112
- Golden State Water Co. (Bay Point) — (800) 999-4033

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