

My Water appears brown, dirty or discolored.

Occasionally you may find that your tap water looks slightly brown. Too much iron and /or manganese in water causes it to turn brown.

These can be disturbed if there is a sudden change in the direction or speed of flow in the nearby water main.

This can happen for a number of reasons, for example; a burst on the water main; bringing a water main back into use after repairs; having to move water from one area to another to cope with changes in demand; or the fire service taking a lot of water to deal with an emergency. Brown water may also be caused by rusty galvanized iron pipes in the home's plumbing. If you have a water heater that's old or seen better days, it may be rusting and causing your water discoloration issue as well.

If the cause is due to fluctuation of pressure or main repairs, the water supply company will flush the lines, clearing up the discoloration. If the water supply company has not received any other reports of discolored water, the problem probably resides within the home.

Sometimes the problem is seen first thing in the morning, or after periods of lower water use. It is also seen at seldom-used faucets. The water should clear after flushing the faucet briefly.

If this is only occurring with hot water, flushing the hot water tank may help by clearing out the sediment in the bottom of the tank. Hot water increases the rate of corrosion in plumbing. You may want to consult a plumber for safety precautions.

Avoid running hot water if the cold water is still discolored. This will minimize filling the hot water tank with turbid water.

Is Brown Water From the Sink Safe to Drink?

Believe it or not, yes. Brown (or other discolored) water is not harmful to drink or brush your teeth with, even though it may look unpleasant.

Laundry

Iron in water leaves ungainly stains on you laundry and the washing machine. Don't run your washing machine at all with this type of problem. If you do, make sure you stay away from bleach with chlorine, which reacts to the rust in your water, ruining you laundry. If your brown water issues started mid-load, it is better to stop the cycle while it is full and wait until clean water is available to finish. If you allow the water to empty from the washing machine and go into the spin cycle it is more likely to cause permanent staining to the laundry items. Wash laundry again in clear water using a rust-stain remover (and lots of bleach this time!)

Water Heaters

Water heater manufacturers recommend annual maintenance of your water heater. Maintenance includes flushing your hot water heater by running cold water through it to clean out any sediment inside the tank. AWWA (America Water Works Association) recommends flushing twice a year. Flushing the water heater also keeps internal components clean and free from rust or mineral buildup. But it also has another effect besides keeping your tank clean and operational: It extends the life of your water heater.

Flush the Water Heater

To flush a hot water tank, turn off the power supply for electric heaters or turn the gas knob to pilot mode first. Turn the cold water inlet valve off to the water heater. Connect a common garden hose to the drain valve at the bottom of the water heater to drain the tank. Lead the hose outside. Open the drain valve, along with some nearby hot water faucets, to let the water drain completely from the tank. Next, open the cold water inlet to flush the tank for a few minutes as cold water runs through it. Close the drain valve, leaving the cold water inlet on. Make sure that a few hot water taps in the house are open so the system will purge air. Once the hot water taps stop hissing and popping water, close the hot water taps and reopen the drain valve once more at the bottom of the tank until clear water comes out, then close. Repeat as necessary until water runs clear from the drain valve.

Well-maintained water heaters have typical lifespans from 10 to 15 years. If your water heater is close to that age with discoloration problems, failure is imminent. Water temperature fluctuations, heavy sediment or dirt deposits and strange banging noises, along with visible corrosion on the bottom of the tank or pooling water underneath it, all indicate that your water heater is ready for the plumbing morgue. Cloudy water or a hot water tank that takes too long to heat is on the way out the door.