

The quality of drinking water in the North West is excellent but on rare occasions tap water may become discoloured or appear cloudy. The discoloration can range from a light straw yellow colour to dark brown.

Discoloration may be caused by a number of things, including:

- Naturally occurring substances in the raw water used for producing drinking water. Waters from some sources contain elevated levels of iron, manganese or organic material that can give a yellow or brown tint to the water.
- Disturbance of naturally occurring mains deposits. Over time these deposits (including iron and manganese) can settle and build up within our network of water mains. Sometimes these deposits can be disturbed (for example, following a burst or a sudden increase in the demand for water) and resuspended into the water, causing the discoloration.
- Deterioration of cast iron mains. Over time, cast iron corrodes. The corrosion products or 'rust' can be picked up in the pipe and give an orange-brown appearance to the water.
- Corrosion of service pipes. Service pipe is the name of the pipe which connects your home to the water main in the street. These pipes can also corrode. Flakes of darkly coloured material can indicate corrosion of lead service pipes. (Lead pipes are still present in some properties built before the 1970s.)
- Air in the water. Under pressure in the mains, air can become trapped causing water to have a milky white appearance when drawn from the tap. This can happen following repairs to fractured water mains.

What should I do if I have discoloured water?

Discoloured water can often be cleared by allowing the first incoming cold water tap (usually in the kitchen) to run at a trickle until it clears. Some discoloration can clear quickly (within minutes) but this can take longer depending on the cause. If the discoloration does not clear, please check with your neighbours to determine if their water is also discoloured.

If your neighbours do not have discoloured water then the cause is almost certainly due to pipework between the main in the road and the kitchen tap.

If you have cloudy water please fill a glass with water and leave to stand for a few minutes. The tiny air bubbles will rise to the surface and the cloudy appearance will disappear from the bottom upwards. If the water does not clear in this way please contact us.

Discoloured water caused by mains deposits is unlikely to be harmful to health. Cloudy water caused by tiny air bubbles in the water is not harmful to health. However, if you have any concerns about the quality of your drinking water supply please contact us.

What are we doing to reduce the likelihood of discoloured water?

We have over 40,000 km of mains in the ground and supply water to approximately seven million people in the North West of England.

In areas where there is a localised discoloration problem we carry out controlled flushing of the distribution system to reduce the build up of deposits. However, flushing needs to be carried out carefully to avoid making the problem worse.

These measures will continue to improve the quality of drinking water and minimise the risk of you receiving discoloured water.

Your water quality

If you're interested in finding out more about the quality of your drinking water, please visit unitedutilities.com/waterquality and enter your postcode. We'll tell you where your water comes from, together with other information such as its hardness.

For further information



[unitedutilities.com/
waterquality](https://unitedutilities.com/waterquality)



0345 672 3723

8am - 8pm Mon-Fri

8am - 6pm Sat

8am - 12 noon Sun

The Drinking Water Inspectorate is responsible for ensuring the quality of public water supplies.

Visit their website at:

dwi.defra.gov.uk



About us

United Utilities is the North West's water company. We keep the taps flowing and toilets flushing for seven million customers every day. From Crewe to Carlisle, we work hard behind the scenes to help your life flow smoothly.

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