



A Guide to Common Water Quality Questions and Concerns

Here is a quick guide to help identify some common household problems and possible solutions. If you have any further questions after reading this, please contact our customer service department at 239-992-0711 for assistance.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: **Is my drinking water safe for all uses?**

Answer: Our water supply meets or exceeds all federal, state, and local drinking water standards. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) set all standards. The water is safe for watering all plants and is safe for all pets to drink with the EXCEPTION of fish, reptiles and amphibians that live in the water. Remove disinfectant (chloramines and chlorine) before adding water to tanks and aquariums. Consult your local pet store for the appropriate neutralizing agent.

Question: **I was told I need a home water treatment system or filter for my drinking water?**

Answer: Home water filters may improve taste, smell or appearance, but they do not make the water any safer or healthier.

Question: **Do I need to buy bottled water?**

Answer: There is no need to buy bottled water for health reasons. Our water meets all drinking water standards.

Question: **Does BSU sample the drinking water?**

Answer: Certified plant operators test the water 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Lee County Health Department also samples and checks bacteriological samples from 80 residences each month to ensure safe drinking water. State certified water quality technicians flush dead-end water mains to check chlorine levels daily to ensure quality.

Question: **Why are corrosion inhibitors used in water treatment?**

Answer: To preclude the leaching of certain metals into the water – particularly lead, copper and iron.

Question: **Why do we sample for lead and copper?**

Answer: EPA and FDEP regulate these materials. We have to demonstrate that our water is stable and does not promote leaching of these materials into household plumbing system.

Question: **What is the fluoride concentration of our water?**

Answer: Very low levels of fluoride are naturally present in drinking water. This fluoride comes from geological formations. On average, our water has 0.2 mg/L, well below the maximum limit of 4.0 mg/L. We do not add fluoride.

- Question: **What is the hardness of our drinking water?**
Answer: The average hardness is about 100 mg/L. Soft water is 110 mg/L or less and hard water is 200 mg/L or more.
- Question: **Why do we use monochloramine for disinfection? (Not Chlorine)**
Answer: Monochloramine is a chemical that uses both chlorine and ammonia. This disinfectant prevents chlorine from reacting with certain organic material that occurs naturally in almost all ground water.
- Question: **Why do I sometimes see technicians flushing fire hydrants?**
Answer: We regularly flush fire hydrants to test for and maintain chlorine and pH levels.
- Question: **Does BSU maintain the fire hydrants?**
Answer: We conduct hydrant maintenance regularly on all the hydrants throughout the service area and flush hydrants to ensure that they are working properly.
- Question: **Why does my water look green or yellow at times?**
Answer: Most water from the source water wells that supply the BSU treatment facilities contain trace amounts of organic material that occur naturally and tend to impart a yellow/green to green color when rainfall percolates through the ground into the water table. The color is most noticeable in large volume with a light colored background such as a buckets, bathtubs or pools. The color issue is purely aesthetic and the level is below the maximum standard set by the US Environmental Protection Agency and FL Dept. of Environmental Protection of 15 color units.
- Question: **Why is there orange or pink material in my bathtub/shower and/or toilet?**
Answer: Pink residue is frequently caused by a naturally occurring airborne bacteria called Serratia Marcescens. The bacteria can produce a pinkish residue on surfaces that regularly get wet, including showers, toilets, bathtubs and sinks. Proper ventilation along with limiting moisture and soap residue are the easiest ways to deal with this residue.

Water has a Bad Smell

- Issue: **The water smells like rotten eggs, must or earth.**
Likely Cause: Bacteria growing inside your drain or water heater can cause an unpleasant smell. The plumbing beneath your sink can collect debris over time and create an odor at your trap.
Possible Remedy: Disinfect the drain using commercially approved disinfectant cleaners and flush the hot water heater annually.

Small Black Particles in the Water

- Issue: **Black specks that are hard and similar to coffee grounds**
Likely Cause: Carbon used to treat water is leaking from inside of a water filter
Possible Remedy: Replace the water filter.
- Issue: **Black specks that are solid, yet rubbery**
Likely Cause: These are probably pieces of an old, disintegrated faucet washer or gasket, especially if the particles are only coming from one faucet.
Possible Remedy: Replace the faucet washers and the packing at the ends of the water supply lines.

Issue: **Black specks are very small and oily, or sooty**
Likely Cause: Stainless steel, braided mesh supply lines are lined with rubber that might be disintegrating. Water heater hoses connecting to the water supply can disintegrate as well.
Possible Remedy: Replace the hoses with ones that have a water-disinfection, resistant lining or are made from something other than rubber.

Issue: **Black specks that are small, irregular in size and shape, very hard and might include specks of other colors too**
Likely Cause: Iron from your pipes, especially if the water is otherwise clear
Possible Remedy: Replace the pipes if the problem is significant.

Small White or Tan Particles in the Water

Issue: **White or tan specks that are flaky, thin and irregular in shape**
Likely Cause: Minerals such as calcium and magnesium carbonate can be dislodged from pipe walls by repair work, a water softener or corrosion.
Possible Remedy: In small amounts these minerals are beneficial to humans and are not a health concern.

Issue: **White or tan specks that are round and the texture of sand can clog screens and aerators.**
Likely Cause: Minerals that accumulate inside your water heater
Possible Remedy: Flush the hot water heater at least once a year.

Issue: **White or tan particles that float, are flaky, irregular and sometimes have a faint bluish-green tint**
Likely Cause: Some water heaters contain a plastic dip tube that can disintegrate.
Possible Remedy: Contact the water heater manufacturer; they might replace the tube at no cost.

Issue: **White or tan specks that are small, round beads uniform in size, shape and color**
Likely Cause: Water softener resin beads from a broken water softener
Possible Remedy: Contact your water softener service agent for repairs.

Small Brown or Orange Particles in the Water

Issue: **Brown or orange specks that are hard and irregular in shape and size**
Likely Cause: Usually small pieces of rusted steel that have broken off from the inside of your water pipes, especially if the water is otherwise clear
Possible Remedy: You might want to consider replacing the piping if the problem is significant enough to clog showerheads or faucets. If the water is discolored, the problem is probably located in the utility water mains. Please call BSU.

Issue: **Brown or orange specks that are small, round beads the size of fish eggs and are consistent in appearance**
Likely Cause: Commonly a broken water softener
Possible Remedy: Contact your water softener service agent for repairs.

Change in Water Color

Issue: **The water is yellow, orange, red or brown.**
Likely Cause: Rusty pipes
Possible Remedy: Rusty pipes are an indication of pipes that are corroding and might leak. If you see discolored water at all faucets and it does not improve after running for a few minutes, please contact BSU. The following situations indicate that there is corrosion to pipes on your property and you should contact a plumber: the water clears after it has run for a few minutes; the discoloration is in the hot water only; discolored water comes from some, but not all faucets.

Issue: **The water is milky white.**
Likely Cause: Air dissolved in the water.
Possible Remedy: None. This is a natural phenomenon and the water is safe to use. To test for this, pour water in clear glass and observe for 2 to 3 minutes. You should see the water clear, starting at the bottom and then entirely.

Issue: **The water is green.**
Likely Cause: Extreme corrosion of copper pipes is probably the culprit. Copper corrosion can be caused by electrical systems and problems related to the water heater.
Possible Remedy: Contact a plumber to determine cause and best solution. Most copper corrosion problems are very complex and require consulting an expert.

Issue: **The water is blue (rare).**
Likely Cause: Extreme copper pipe corrosion or a leaking water valve in a toilet that has a blue-colored cleaning system
Possible Remedy: Contact a plumber.

Water Leaves Residue or Stain

Issue: **The dishes have residue after I wash them.**
Likely Cause: Minerals in your water
Possible Remedy: Set your dishwasher on the hardness setting for your region. In our area, hardness ranges from 80 to 100 mg/L or five to six grains per gallon. Clean your dishwasher with two cups of vinegar and a dishwasher cleaning product, and then run the cleaning cycle with no dishes inside.

Issue: **The water is staining my clothes.**
Likely Cause: Corrosion products from distribution system or household plumbing
Possible Remedy: Simply flush out your water lines or water heater, or change the type of detergent or bleach used.

Issue: **My toilet bowl has a black ring around it.**
Likely Cause: Mold, mildew or mineral deposits at the water/air interface
Possible Remedy: Remove the rings with a toilet bowl brush and household cleaners. The recommendation is to clean with bleach or a product such as CLR. Keep the toilet lid closed to reduce the number of spores and reduce the light needed for bacteria growth.