



## *A Guide to Common Household Water Quality Concerns*

Does the water in your home look, taste or smell unpleasant? Many such issues are aesthetic, and usually do not present a health risk. Here is a quick guide to help identify some common household problems and possible solutions. If you are still unsure after reading this, contact BSU for assistance.

### **Concern: There are little specks floating in my 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.

**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 shower heads 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.

### **Concern: There are white or tan particles in my 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.

### **Concern: My water has a strange 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 the water is discolored at all faucets and doesn't 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 the 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.

### **Concern: My water smells bad.**

Issue: **The water smells like rotten eggs, must or earth.**

Likely Cause: Bacteria is growing inside your drain or water heater can cause an unpleasant smell.

Possible Remedy: Disinfect the drain using commercially approved disinfectant cleaners or flush the hot water heater annually.

### **Concern: Residue on dishes**

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, then run the cleaning cycle with no dishes inside.