



Every year, the Portland Water District fields some calls from customers concerned about discolored water coming from their faucet. Discolored water can occur for a number of reasons including,

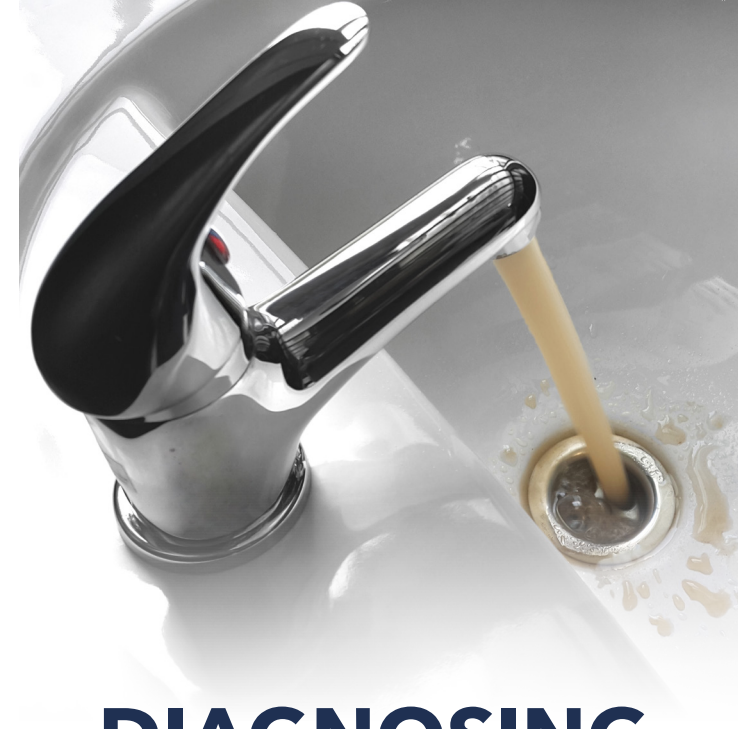
- Planned water system maintenance or construction,
- Water system activity in your neighborhood such as firefighting and fire hydrant use, or
- Issues with your home plumbing.

People who experience discolored water at the tap usually describe it as yellow, brown, or rust-colored. Although the off-colored water may not be aesthetically pleasing, according to the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), increased levels of natural sediments in water are not public health threats.



Portland Water District

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DIAGNOSING Discolored Water at the Tap

THREE simple steps
to diagnosing the problem



Portland Water District



The Portland Water District minimizes water discoloration from maintenance and system activities by flushing water mains on a regular basis. **If you experience discolored water, follow the steps below to help determine if your home plumbing may be the cause of the issue.**



STEP 1: Compare hot and cold water.

If only the hot water is discolored: The color is likely from your water heating device or pipes; they may need to be flushed or serviced.

If only the cold water is discolored, or the color is appearing in both hot and cold: Go to Step 2 to determine the extent of discolored water.

STEP 2: Check all faucets inside home, including toilets.

If you see discoloration at some faucets, but not all: You may have an issue with the plumbing in specific locations in your home, not with the water coming into your home from the street. Your internal pipes may need to be flushed or serviced by a plumber.

If you see discoloration at all faucets, including toilets: The color may not be from a specific location in your home. Go to Step 3.



STEP 3: Run a cold water faucet for one to two minutes.

If the discoloration clears quickly after you run the water: There may be an issue with the plumbing in your home as the color resolved when you brought in fresh water from the water main (pipe). If your home has older plumbing, you may often see discolored water when you turn on the tap after it hasn't been used for a while. Consult with a plumbing professional.

If running the water does not resolve discolored water: An activity in your neighborhood likely occurred causing the discolored water. Discoloration can happen when the flow of water suddenly changes velocity, causing natural sediments inside water pipes to be stirred up. Check the PWD website at www.pwd.org to see if there is street work happening in your neighborhood. If the water system has been "stirred up," it may take a few hours for the discoloration to clear. Check to see if the water has cleared by running a cold water faucet for two minutes. If it does not clear, turn the water off and wait another 30 minutes before running it again. While the water is discolored, limit your hot water use and avoid washing light-colored laundry. When the water does clear, flush your faucets by running them for a minute or two and clean faucet aerator screens.

If the issue persists, please contact our customer service department.