

# TASTE & ODOR ISSUES



Causes of unusual tastes and odors in drinking water

ILLINOIS  
AMERICAN WATER

## Why does water sometimes taste/smell “funny”?

The most common reason for water that tastes “funny” is the chlorine that is added to drinking water to kill bacteria and other waterborne organisms that can affect human health. Chlorine is used as a disinfectant and is critical to the water treatment process. In fact, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency require water utilities to maintain a certain level of disinfectant in the distribution system to protect consumers from disease-causing bacteria as the water travels from our treatment plant along the miles of pipeline and in your home.

## What are other possible causes of sudden changes in the taste/odor?

- Changing weather conditions and algae outbreaks can produce earthy or musty tastes and odors. This occurs seasonally, typically in the spring or fall. When this occurs, we adjust our treatment processes to address any odors present in its source water.
- Chlorine odors may be more noticeable in warmer water temperatures than cold water. Illinois American Water strives to apply the lowest amount of disinfectant to your water to ensure that bacteria growth is kept in check in our distribution system.
- Taste and odor problems in certain taps in your home could be the result of internal plumbing problems. Drain odors can sometimes be perceived as the odor being present in the water. To verify if the water contains the odor, fill a clean glass (plastic not recommended) with water from the tap and move away from the sink area. If the odor is still present in the water, contact our Customer Service Center for additional information.
- Some home water treatment devices can cause taste and odor issues if they are not maintained according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Hot water heaters need to be flushed periodically to minimize tastes and odors. If not maintained properly, you might experience a rotten egg odor in your hot water only. Follow all manufacturer’s recommendations outlined in your owner’s manual for properly maintaining your unit.
- Water that has not been used for a period of time may have a taste and odor present. Flush your taps when returning home if the water has not been used for 24 hours.
- Some medications increase a person’s sensitivity to taste and odors in water.



## What should I do if I have a concern?

If an unusual taste or odor persists in your water, please contact Illinois American Water at (800) 422-2782.

## For more information

Illinois American Water  
Customer Service  
Center: (800) 422-2782

Our customer service representatives are available 24/7 to assist you.

For more information related to drinking water standards, customers can also call the EPA Hotline: (800) 426-4791

Visit us online at [illinoisamwater.com](http://illinoisamwater.com).

## Tips on how to remove the taste and smell of chlorine in your water

- If your water is treated with chlorine: Place water in an uncovered glass container in the refrigerator overnight. This will allow the chlorine to dissipate at a faster pace. A container with a large opening works better than one that has a smaller opening. Another option is to boil the tap water for five minutes and allow it to cool. This should remove most of the chlorine.
- If your water is treated with chloramine: Boil the tap water for 20 minutes and allow it to cool. This should remove most of the disinfectant.
- Add a lemon slice or a few drops of lemon juice to a glass of drinking water.

Please Note: Once you remove the chlorine, be sure to refrigerate the water to limit bacterial regrowth. Illinois American Water does not recommend that the public remove all traces of a disinfectant in the water supply.

**WE CARE ABOUT WATER. IT'S WHAT WE DO.**