United Utilities – Water quality webpage testing (Route A and B)

Online survey

Introduction

Show to all

Thank you for taking part in our survey. This survey is being conducted by Explain Research on behalf of United Utilities, it should take you approximately X to complete.

United Utilities have multiple pages of their website designed to provide customers with as much information and support they may need on the topic of water quality. These webpages have recently been updated and United Utilities would like your feedback on the information provided as well as the language used on the webpage.

Throughout this survey, you will be presented with different sections of webpages that are relevant to you individually and asked to provide your feedback. Please give as much detail as possible throughout the survey, your feedback will influence decisions United Utilities make in the future.

Privacy policies

Show to In the Flow members

Members who participate in surveys on In the Flow are provided with an option at the end of the survey to enter a prize draw with a chance of winning 1 of 4 £25 Love2Shop vouchers. In the event of winning a prize, entrants will be contacted via a notification email from a member of the Explain team to their email address.

For further information about incentives, click here.

To view the community privacy policy, click here.

To view the Explain privacy policy, click here.

To view the community terms and conditions, click here.

Further details on how we process your data can be found here: https://www.explainresearch.co.uk/privacy-policy/

All your responses to the survey will be treated in the strictest confidence in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and Market Research Society Code of Conduct. To view our privacy policy please click here. Further details on how Explain process your data can be found here: https://www.explainresearch.co.uk/privacy-policy/.

Please click on the **'NEXT'** button below to get started

Show to panel respondents

All your responses to the survey will be treated in the strictest confidence in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and Market Research Society Code of Conduct. To view our privacy policy please click here. Further details on how Explain process your data can be found here: https://www.explainresearch.co.uk/privacy-policy/.

Please click on the **'NEXT'** button below to get started

Eligibility and profile screener

Ask to panel respondents

SQ1. Please confirm which region of the UK you live in.

Screen out all other than 4

1. South East
2. South West
3. West Midlands
4. North West
5. North East
6. Yorkshire and Humber
7. East Midlands
8. East England
9. Scotland
10. Northern Ireland
11. Wales
12. London
13. Don't know

SQ2. Which part of the North West do you live in?

Quotas set on all

1. Cumbria
2. Cheshire
3. Greater Manchester
4. Lancashire
5. Merseyside

SQ3. Which of the following age bands do you fall into?

Quotas set on all. Screen out on 1

1. Under 18
2. 18-29
3. 30-39
4. 40-49
5. 50-59
6. 60-69
7. 70+

SQ4. What is your ethnicity?

1. Asian – Bangladeshi
2. Asian – Indian
3. Black or Black British – African
4. Black or Black British – Caribbean
5. Mixed – Any other mixed background
6. Mixed – White and Asian
7. White – Any other white background
8. White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British

SQ5. Do you currently have a water meter installed at your home? We need to know this to ensure you are provided with relevant areas of the website.

A water meter is a device that measures how much water you use. It is similar to your gas or electricity meter. Your supplier uses readings from the meter to calculate how much to charge you for your water and sewerage services.
If you are unsure, please click the following link as we need to know this information to continue the survey:

https://www.unitedutilities.com/my-account/all-about-water-meters/i-have-a-water-meter/information-about-meters/#:~:text=You'll%20usually%20find%20your,a%20small%20round%20plastic%20lid

Quotas set on all. Screen out DK

Ask to all panel and community members

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

SQ6. How would you describe yourself?

Quotas set on all

1. Male
2. Female
3. I describe my gender in another way (please specify) – Open response
4. Prefer not to say

SQ7. How would you rate your technical ability when it comes to using online tools?

Ask to all panel and community members

1. Very confident
2. Somewhat confident
3. Neither confident nor unconfident
4. Somewhat unconfident
5. Very unconfident

SQ8: Can you confirm which of these applies to you?

1. I am the main account holder, and I am responsible for paying the water bills
2. I am not the main account holder, but I am jointly responsible for paying the water bills
3. I am not the main account holder and don't currently have any responsibility towards paying the water bills but may do in the future
4. Prefer not to say

SQ7. Do any of the following apply to you? We would like to collect this to ensure that a variety of needs is represented in the study, but you do not need to answer if you do not wish to. Please select all that apply.

Ask to all panel and community members

1. I or another member of my household is disabled or suffer(s) from a debilitating illness
2. I or another member of my household have/has a learning difficulty
3. I or another member of my household relies on water for medical reasons
4. I or another member of my household is visually impaired (i.e. struggles to read even with glasses)
5. I or another member of my household am/is over the age of 75 years old
6. I or another member of my household speaks English as a second language
7. I or another member of my household is deaf or hard of hearing
8. I or another member of my household is a new parent
9. None of the above – Single code
10. Prefer not to say – Single code

Show to all

Thank you for taking part in our survey. This survey is being conducted by Explain Research. It should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

United Utilities has multiple pages of their website designed to provide customers with information and support when researching their water quality. These webpages have recently been updated, and they would like your feedback on the information provided as well as the language used on the webpage.

Throughout this survey, you will be presented with different sections of a webpage and asked to provide your feedback. Please give as much detail as possible throughout the survey, your feedback will influence decisions in the future.

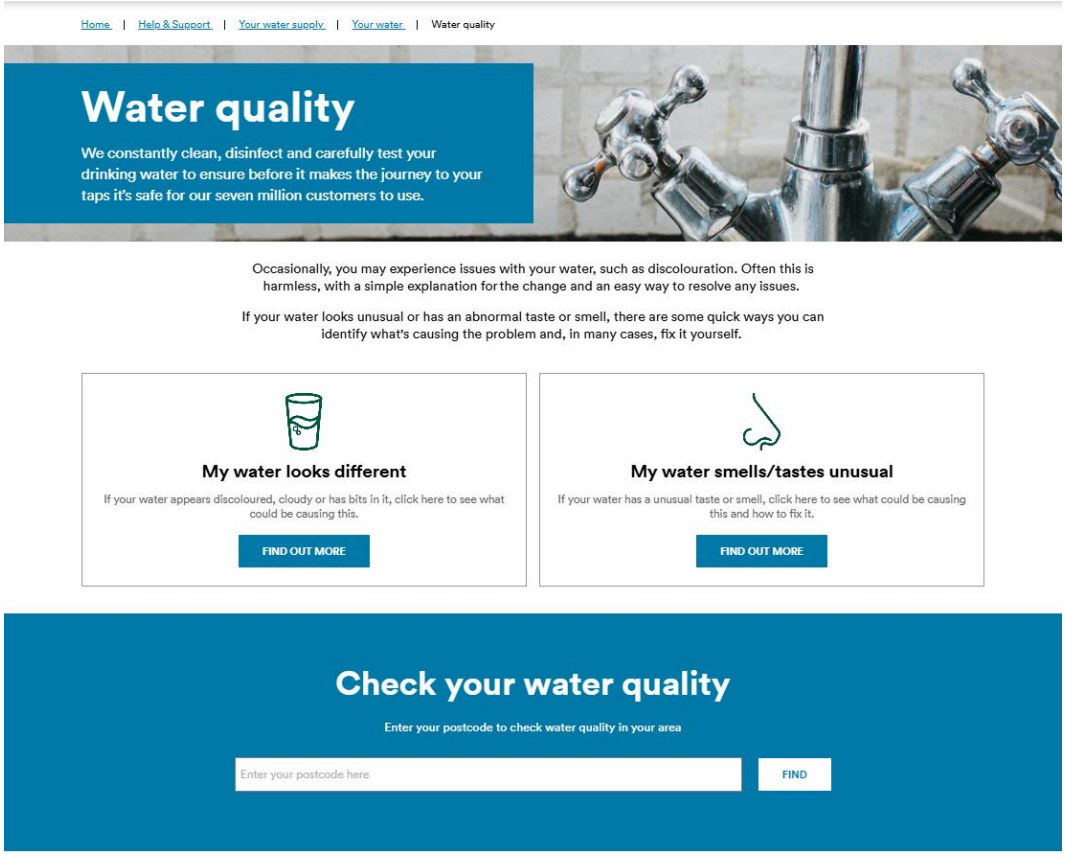
The webpage that we would like you to review covers water quality.

You will be presented with different sections of the webpage individually, with an opportunity to comment on the whole webpage. If you wish, you can view the full webpage here: Water quality | United Utilities, however there will be images of the webpage throughout to refer to.

Imagine you have visited United Utilities website because you are experiencing issues with your water quality and would like to find more information. You arrive at the webpage below. For this first section, we'd like you to look at the introduction to the webpage which is situated at the top of the page.

Please click on the **'NEXT'** button below to get started

1. Click on the below image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible. Please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your water quality.



2. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- it provides the right level of context to understand the information on the webpage

3. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements after reviewing the water quality landing page ?

- The language used is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is 'just right'
- The layout makes it easy to access the relevant information
- It provides the correct level of information to help me navigate to the relevant part of the website.

4. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

4a. [If yes to Q4] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

5. Is there anything on this webpage that you did not understand?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

5a. [If yes to Q5] Please specify the aspects of the webpage you found difficult to understand?

- Open

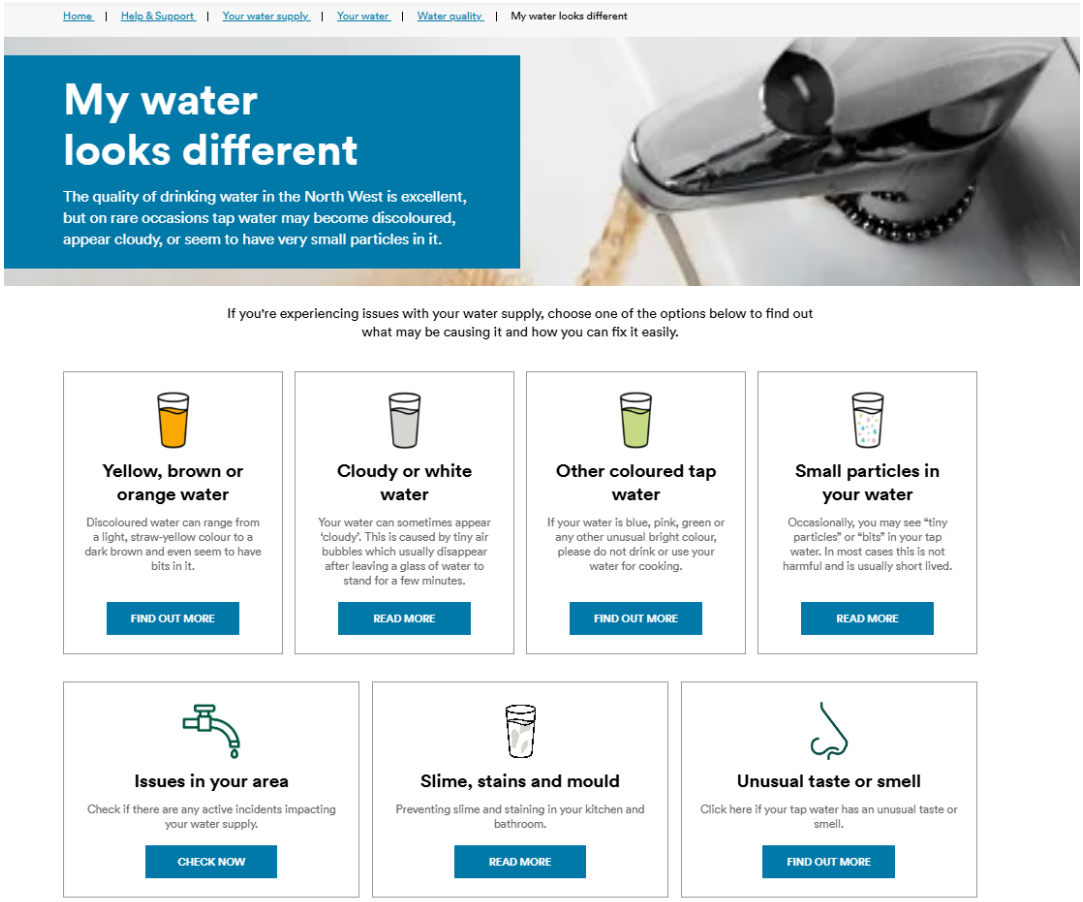
5b. [If yes to Q5] Where might you go to find any missing information?

- Look further into the website
- Call United Utilities
- Search elsewhere online
- Other (Please specify)

Route A

You will now be shown the webpage you would be presented with if you were to follow 'My water looks different'.

6. Click on the below image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible Please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand why your water looks different.



7. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- it provides the right level of context to understand the information on the webpage
- It provides the right amount of information to direct me to the water quality information I need

8. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

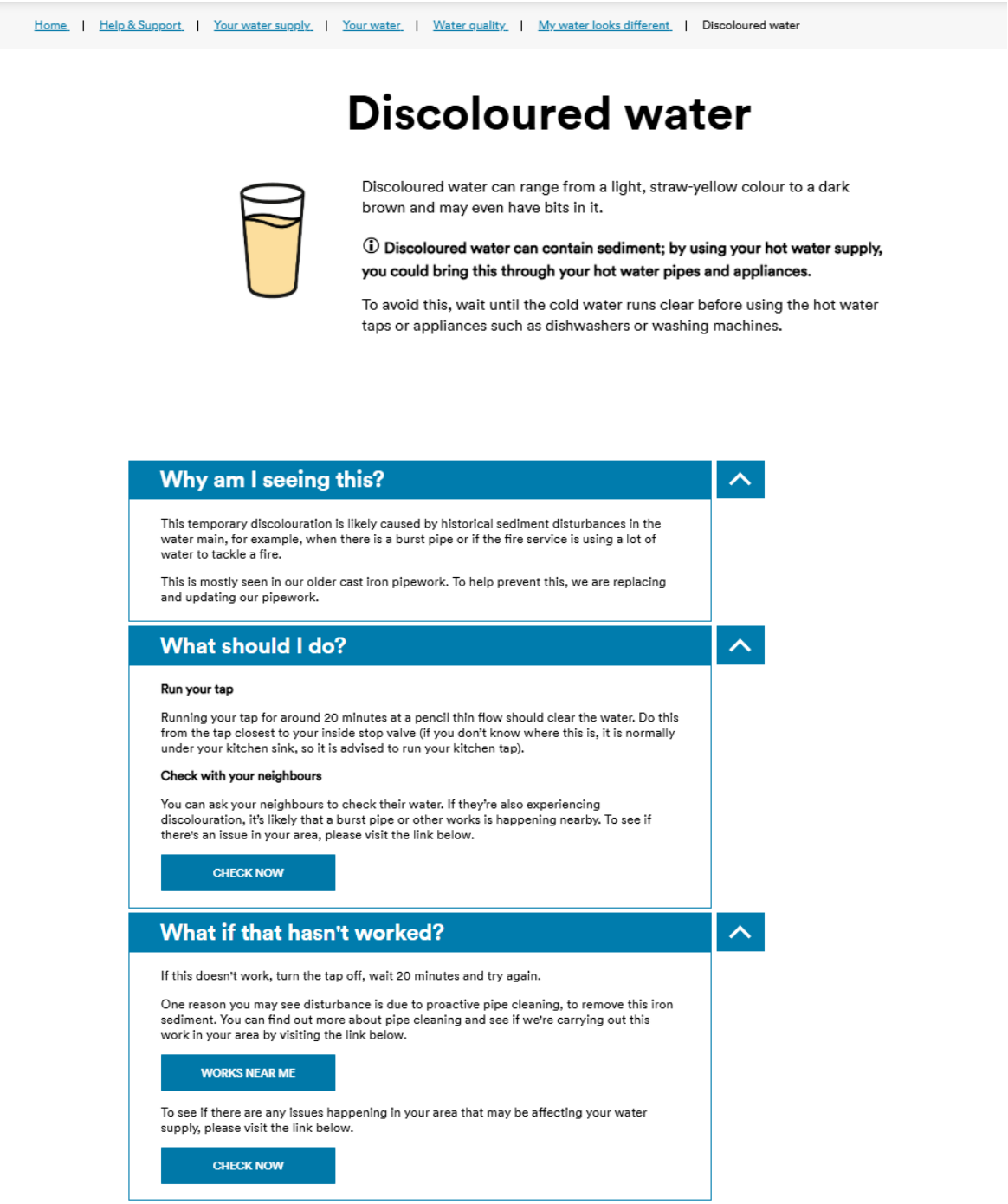
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

8a. [If yes to Q8] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

Following this page, you will be presented with a variety of options to explore why your water looks different.

9. Click on the below image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible Again, please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your water quality.



Home | Help & Support | Your water supply | Your water | Water quality | My water looks different | Discoloured water

Discoloured water

Discoloured water can range from a light, straw-yellow colour to a dark brown and may even have bits in it.

ⓘ Discoloured water can contain sediment; by using your hot water supply, you could bring this through your hot water pipes and appliances.

To avoid this, wait until the cold water runs clear before using the hot water taps or appliances such as dishwashers or washing machines.

Why am I seeing this?

This temporary discolouration is likely caused by historical sediment disturbances in the water main, for example, when there is a burst pipe or if the fire service is using a lot of water to tackle a fire.

This is mostly seen in our older cast iron pipework. To help prevent this, we are replacing and updating our pipework.

What should I do?

Run your tap

Running your tap for around 20 minutes at a pencil thin flow should clear the water. Do this from the tap closest to your inside stop valve (if you don't know where this is, it is normally under your kitchen sink, so it is advised to run your kitchen tap).

Check with your neighbours

You can ask your neighbours to check their water. If they're also experiencing discolouration, it's likely that a burst pipe or other works is happening nearby. To see if there's an issue in your area, please visit the link below.

CHECK NOW

What if that hasn't worked?

If this doesn't work, turn the tap off, wait 20 minutes and try again.

One reason you may see disturbance is due to proactive pipe cleaning, to remove this iron sediment. You can find out more about pipe cleaning and see if we're carrying out this work in your area by visiting the link below.

WORKS NEAR ME

To see if there are any issues happening in your area that may be affecting your water supply, please visit the link below.

CHECK NOW

10. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right level of information to answer questions I would have if I was experiencing discoloured water

11. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

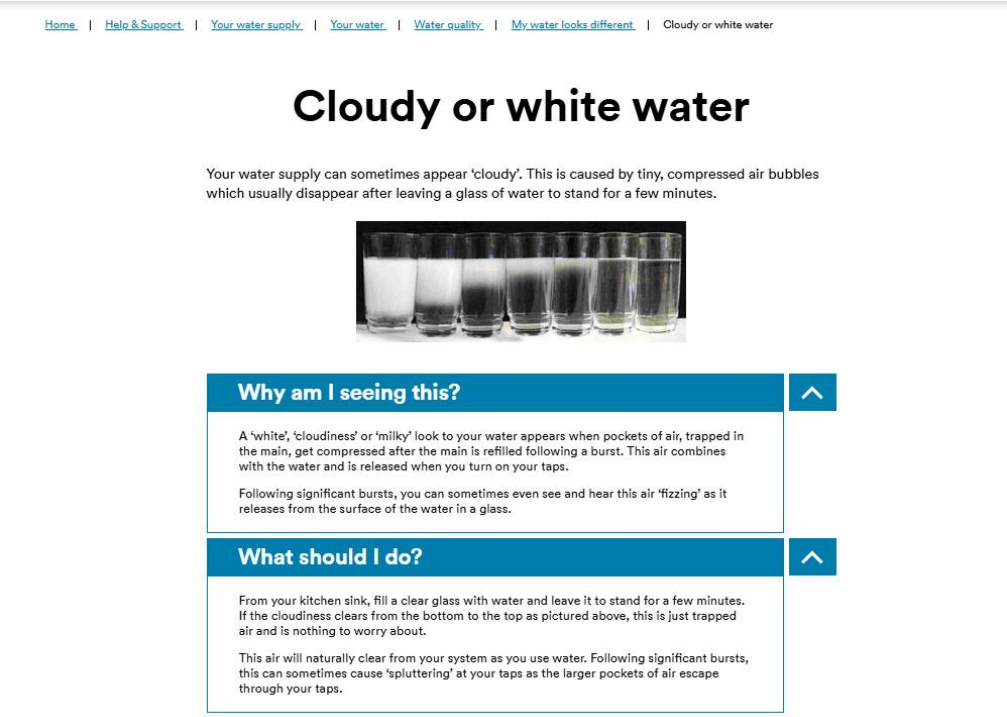
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

11a. [If yes to 11] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

Below is the page you would follow if your water were cloudy or white.

12. Click on the image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible Again, please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your water quality.



Home | Help & Support | Your water supply | Your water | Water quality | My water looks different | Cloudy or white water

Cloudy or white water

Your water supply can sometimes appear 'cloudy'. This is caused by tiny, compressed air bubbles which usually disappear after leaving a glass of water to stand for a few minutes.

Why am I seeing this?

A 'white', 'cloudiness' or 'milky' look to your water appears when pockets of air, trapped in the main, get compressed after the main is refilled following a burst. This air combines with the water and is released when you turn on your taps.

Following significant bursts, you can sometimes even see and hear this air 'fizzing' as it releases from the surface of the water in a glass.

What should I do?

From your kitchen sink, fill a clear glass with water and leave it to stand for a few minutes. If the cloudiness clears from the bottom to the top as pictured above, this is just trapped air and is nothing to worry about.

This air will naturally clear from your system as you use water. Following significant bursts, this can sometimes cause 'spluttering' at your taps as the larger pockets of air escape through your taps.

13. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right level of information to answer questions I would have if I was experiencing cloudy or white water

14. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

14a. [If yes to Q14] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

Below is the page you would follow if your water were blue, pink, green or another colour.

15. Click on the image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible. Please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your water quality.

Home | Help & Support | Your water supply | Your water | Water quality | My water looks different | Blue, pink, green or other coloured water

Blue, pink, green or other coloured water

If your water is blue, pink, green or any other unusual bright colour, please follow our advice contained in the sections below.

If your drinking water is a bright or vivid green or blue colour, it may pose a risk to your health. If this happens, please call us immediately on 0345 672 3723.

Why am I seeing this?

Blue/green water can indicate elevated levels of copper in your water. This is most common where newly installed copper pipework has been installed in your property. After a few days of use, a protective layer should form inside the copper pipe as it 'settles in' which will stop the colour. In some instances of older properties, it could indicate a problem with the electrical bonding.

On rare occasions, coloured water can be caused by poorly installed toilet cisterns, which allow water to flow back into your internal plumbing when there is an interruption to your supply. This sometimes only comes to light when coloured toilet cleaning products are used in the cistern.

Algae can also cause a green colour to water, however this would normally only ever occur in properties with 'header tanks' when regular maintenance checks are not completed. If you think this may be what has caused your issue, have your regular maintenance checks completed.

What should I do?

In most instances, this is not caused by the water being supplied to you and is caused by your private internal pipework. You should contact your house builder or a professionally qualified plumber to help.

FIND A PLUMBER

What if it that hasn't worked?

Always ensure that you use an approved plumber when carrying out work in your property.

You may be experiencing coloured mould or slime forming on things that come into contact with water. For more information on slime and staining in your kitchen or bathroom, please visit the link below.

ADVICE HERE

16. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right level of information to answer questions I would have if I was experiencing blue, pink, green or another colour water.

17. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

17a. [If yes to Q17] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

Below is the page you would follow if there were small particles in your water.

18. Click on the image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible Please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your water quality.

Home | Help & Support | Your water supply | Your water | Water quality | My water looks different | 'Bits' in your water

'Bits' in your water

Occasionally, you may see "tiny particles" or "bits" in your tap water. In most cases this is not harmful and is usually short lived.

Why am I seeing this?

Dark red/brown 'bits' can be caused by:

- Historical sediments, that have built up over time, being disturbed in the water pipes - usually caused by sudden changes to direction or flow rate of the water within the mains, for example when there is a sudden higher demand such as the fire service using a lot of water to fight a fire.
- Corrosion of your internal pipes due to age or repairs.
- By planned or unplanned work to the water supply network, which has caused sediment in the pipes to shift.

Small dark grey or black particles:

- If your pipework is made by lead, small dark grey or black particles can occasionally be caused. This is most likely if your house was built before 1970. Find out more about lead pipes here.

White particles:

- These particles are calcium deposits or more commonly, naturally occurring limescale. They are more common in hard water areas and are not harmful.

Blue particles:

- Shavings from blue plastic pipes, known as 'swarf' can occur if there have been pipe replacements at the property or within the water supply network. These are not harmful and usually should clear through the system quickly.

Black or pink particles:

- In some cases, 'bits' in your water can be associated with biofilms. This does not come from the cold water mains supply. It is mould and slime that build up, especially in and around your taps. Click here for more information on slime and staining.

What should I do?

If your tap water contains 'bits', you should avoid running the hot water tap or using dishwashers, washing machines or any other appliances which use your hot water supply.

In most cases particles are not harmful, to resolve the issue follow the following steps:

- Allow the first incoming cold water tap (usually in the kitchen) to run at a trickle until it clears – why not collect this water and use it to water your plants?
- Sometimes this can clear quickly (within minutes), but this can take longer depending on the cause.
- If you are experiencing slime, please follow our advice about slime and staining.

What if that hasn't worked?

- If the particles still don't clear, please check with your neighbours to determine if their water is also discoloured.
- If your neighbours are not affected, this is most likely an issue with your internal pipework. Please click here to find a Watersafe approved plumber.
- If you are seeing red, black or blue particles and your neighbours are affected, the issue may be related to a burst pipe or planned works in your area. You can check to see if we're aware of work in your area.
- If you are seeing grey particles and your house is built before the 1970s, you may have lead service pipe . Find out about replacing your lead service pipe here
- If you are seeing white particles and your neighbours are affected, this is most likely calcium deposits, please follow our advice about water hardness here.

19. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right level of information to answer questions I would have if I was experiencing ‘bits’ in my water

20. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

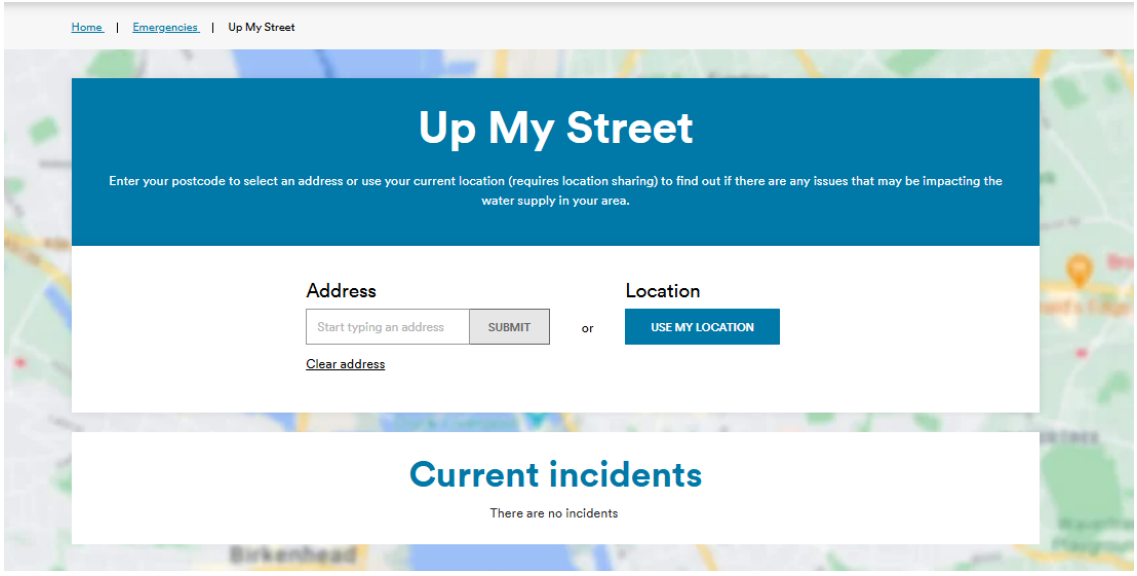
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

19a. [If yes to Q19] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

Below is the page you would follow to see if there were issues in your area.

20. Click on the image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible .Again, please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your water quality.



21. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the correct level of information to help me navigate to the relevant information of issues in my area

22. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

22a. [If yes to Q22] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

Below is the page you would follow to find out how to prevent slime, stains or mould.

23. Click on the image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible. Again, please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your water quality.

Home | Help & Support | Your water supply | Your water | Keep your home slime and stain-free

Preventing slime and staining in your kitchen and bathroom

Top tips to keep slime and stain-free

Slime (black jelly like substance), stains and mould (various colours from pink, red to black) are caused by organisms that breed in damp, warm environments in your home. Generally conditions found in **bathrooms and kitchens**, their occurrence isn't an indication of a problem with the water supply. It's caused by the growth of common bacteria, other microorganisms, or airborne mould around the home; all worsened by poor ventilation.

Read below to find out how you can ensure the water you drink, cook with and wash in is of the very best quality.

Look after your sink

Sinks need a lot of looking after as we use them all the time. Regularly wipe down in between uses, making sure that there's no build-up of dirt and slime. Pay special attention to the tap spout and overflow hole at the back of the sink as this is where staining often occurs.

Shower head

We don't want to look up when we're in the shower to see a dirty showerhead. Simply scrub with an old toothbrush dipped in water to remove any staining or grime, rinse and wipe with a clean cloth.

Start at the top

Wet bathroom dust and a slimy build up will cling to surfaces. Use a mop to reach the top of your wall tiles to make the job much easier. Start at the top and work your way down.

Look after your bathroom cleaning equipment

Not only do we need to clean the bathroom, but we also need to think what we are using to clean, such as cleaning cloths and toilet brushes! Use a separate cloth for the loo seat and pedestal, and keep your toilet brush germ free! Always use clean cloths and wash after using. Make sure you're not cleaning with dirty equipment or hanging them over your sink or taps.

Keep it dry

Good ventilation really helps, turn on your extractor fan to get rid of any condensation, as bacteria loves damp places. Opening the window helps too, but not if it's cold! Dry off areas with an adsorbent cloth instead.

One great piece of bathroom cleaning equipment (but not essential) is a window vac. This will help to remove condensation and water from shower screens, bathroom tiles and windows to reduce moisture and discourage a slimy build up.

Tile grout

We often get pink and dark staining on grout and sealant that can be tricky to clean. An old toothbrush with a mild bleach solution should do the trick, always remember to wear gloves and protect your clothes from bleach.

More about slime and staining

Common places to find slime and staining in your home

- On the inside of cold water taps
- Around the base of tap fittings
- In shower heads and on shower curtains
- On tiles in the bathroom/shower area
- In and around drains and plugholes
- In toilet cisterns and toilet bowls
- In refrigerator drip trays
- In dehumidifiers
- In washing machines, particularly around the powder drawer and the rubber seals

Prevent or remove slime and staining

- Make sure affected areas are well ventilated.
- Clean the inside of the tap or around the base of the tap with a small brush dipped in a mild solution of bleach.
- After cleaning the tap, run the water for a few moments to remove any remaining disinfectant.
- Use a squeegee to wipe water off walls and glass around your shower and bath to prevent mould or stain growth.
- To keep your toilet in top condition – use bleach to get rid of any slime or mould in your loo, scrub with a toilet brush until sparkling.
- Kitchen surfaces or bathroom fittings (tiles etc.) can be wiped with a household cleaner or mild bleach solution that will kill the bacteria or other microorganisms
- Make sure you follow manufacturers cleaning instructions to ensure you don't cause any damage.
- To prevent possible contamination do not leave items such as flannels and dishcloths on the tap to dry and never allow food or animals to come into contact with taps.
- Remove any residues left by cleaning products, soap, shampoo, hairspray or deodorants as they can provide a source of food which encourages growth of bacteria or other microorganisms.
- Repair dripping taps to avoid staining on baths and basins.

Helpful links

For more information on looking after the water in your home, download our leaflet here.

Find out more about slime and staining (biofilms) here.

24. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right level of information to answer questions I would have if I wanted to find out how to prevent slime, stains or mould

25. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

25a. [If yes to Q25] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

26. Taking all into account, using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements after reviewing the full 'my water looks different' section of the webpage?

- The language used is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is 'just right'
- The layout makes it easy to access the relevant information
- It provides the correct level of information to help me navigate to the relevant parts of the webpage
- It provides all the relevant information I would need if I was experiencing issues with the look of my water

27. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

27a. [If yes to Q27] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

28. Is there anything on this webpage that you did not understand?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

28a. [If yes to Q28] Please specify the aspects of the webpage you found difficult to understand?

- Open

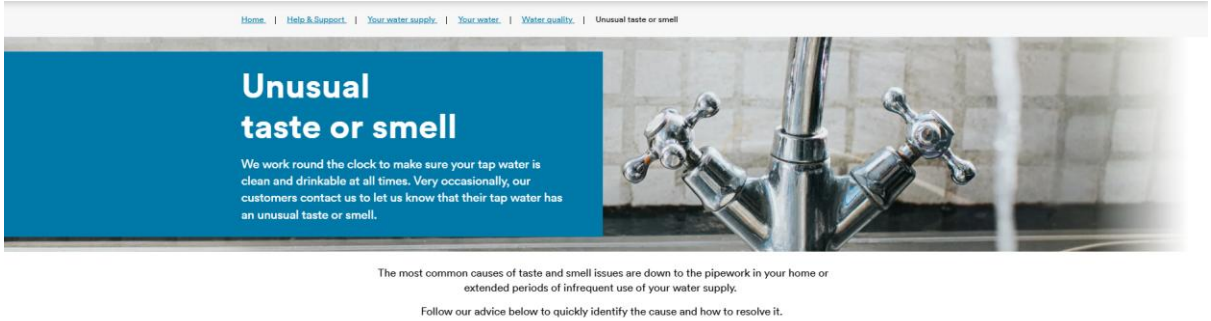
28b. [If yes to Q28] Where might you go to find any missing information?

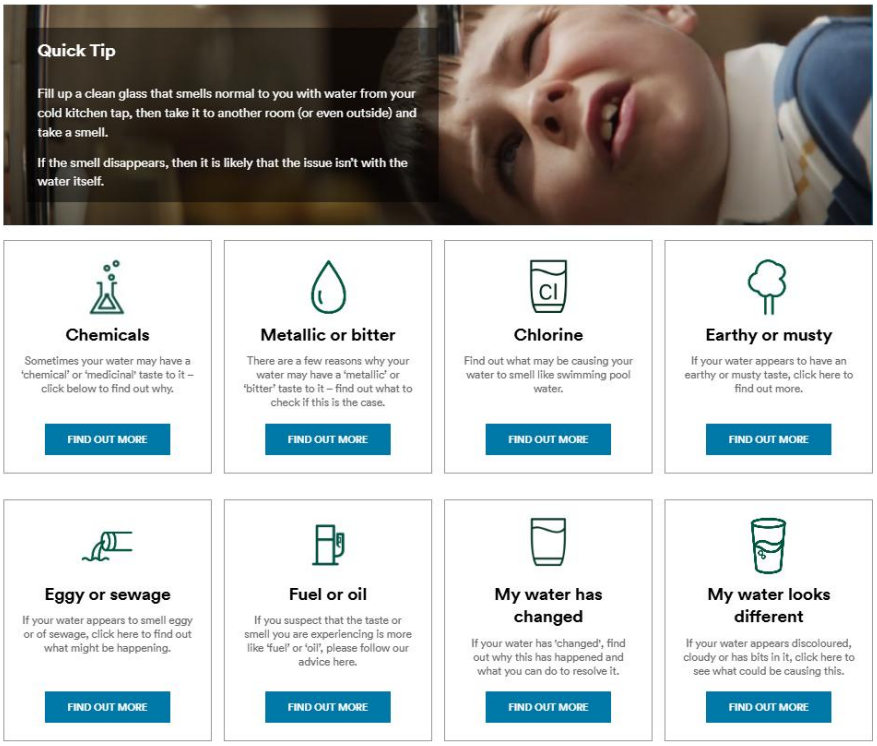
- Look further into the website
- Call United Utilities
- Search elsewhere online
- Other (Please specify)

Route B

You will now be shown the webpage you would be presented with if you were to follow ‘My water smells/tastes unusual’.

6. Click on the below image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible. Please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your water quality.





7. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand

- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right amount of information to direct me to the water quality information I need

8. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

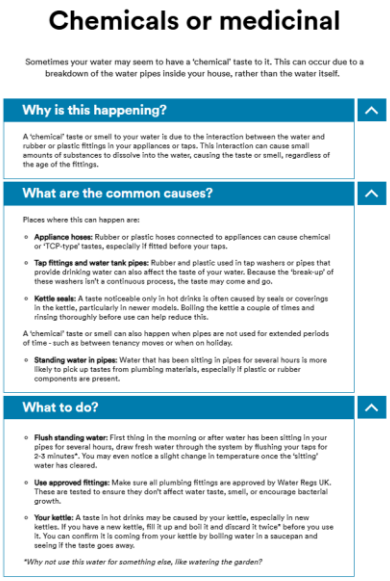
7a. [If yes to 7] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

After this page, you would be presented a number of options to explore the particular smell/taste of your water.

9. Below is the page you would follow if your water tasted/smelt like chemicals.

Click on the image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible. Again, please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your household water quality.



Chemicals or medicinal

Sometimes your water may seem to have a 'chemical' taste to it. This can occur due to a breakdown of the water pipes inside your house, rather than the water itself.

Why is this happening?

A 'chemical' taste or smell to your water is due to the interaction between the water and rubber or plastic fittings in your appliances or taps. This interaction can cause small amounts of substances to dissolve into the water, causing the taste or smell, regardless of the age of the fittings.

What are the common causes?

Places where this can happen are:

- **Appliance hoses:** Rubber or plastic hoses connected to appliances can cause chemical or 'TCP-type' tastes, especially if fitted before your taps.
- **Tap fittings and water tank pipes:** Rubber and plastic used in tap washers or pipes that provide drinking water can also affect the taste of your water. Because the 'break-up' of these washers isn't a continuous process, the taste may come and go.
- **Kettle seals:** A taste noticeable only in hot drinks is often caused by seals or coverings in the kettle, particularly in newer models. Boiling the kettle a couple of times and rinsing thoroughly before use can help reduce this.

A 'chemical' taste or smell can also happen when pipes are not used for extended periods of time - such as between tenancy moves or when on holiday.

- **Standing water in pipes:** Water that has been sitting in pipes for several hours is more likely to pick up tastes from plumbing materials, especially if plastic or rubber components are present.

What to do?

- **Flush standing water:** First thing in the morning or after water has been sitting in your pipes for several hours, draw fresh water through the system by flushing your taps for 2-3 minutes*. You may even notice a slight change in temperature once the 'sitting' water has cleared.
- **Use approved fittings:** Make sure all plumbing fittings are approved by Water Regs UK. These are tested to ensure they don't affect water taste, smell, or encourage bacterial growth.
- **Your kettle:** A taste in hot drinks may be caused by your kettle, especially in new kettles. If you have a new kettle, fill it up and boil it and discard it twice* before you use it. You can confirm it is coming from your kettle by boiling water in a saucepan and seeing if the taste goes away.

**Why not use this water for something else, like watering the garden?*

10. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right level of information to answer questions I would have if I was experiencing a chemical taste/smell in my water

11. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

10a. [If yes to Q10] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

Below is the page you would follow if your water tasted/smelt bitter or metallic.

Click on the image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible. Please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your household water quality.

Bitter or metallic

A metallic taste or smell is usually caused by your pipework or tanks. There are a few different ways in which it can affect your water.

Why is this happening?

- If your cold water pipe runs too close to your hot water pipe, it will warm up your cold water and cause it to pick up traces of substances like copper.
- In large buildings with long lengths of pipework and low water flows, the water has to travel through more pipes before it reaches your tap. This can cause a metallic taste or smell.
- If your water has been standing in pipes for long periods of time, the smell or taste can come from the metal that's used in your pipework (such as copper or zinc).

Occasionally glasses or cups that have been through a dishwasher may retain traces of detergents which can also lead to a bitter taste.

Customers sometimes identify the taste of chlorine as metallic. Click here for advice on chlorine taste and smell.

What to do?

Run your tap: Doing this for a few minutes will bring fresh water into your property and flush the system. This will usually resolve the metallic taste or smell. Instead of letting the water go to waste, why not collect it to water your plants with.

Check your storage tank: If you have a water storage tank, it's also worth checking what it's made from and what condition it's in as this could be behind the taste or smell.

Check your hot and cold water pipes aren't too close to each other: You or a plumber should check that they aren't touching. If they are too close together, you may need to insulate or 'lag' your water pipes to stop the transfer of heat.

11. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right level of information to answer questions I would have if I was experiencing a bitter or metallic taste in my water

12. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

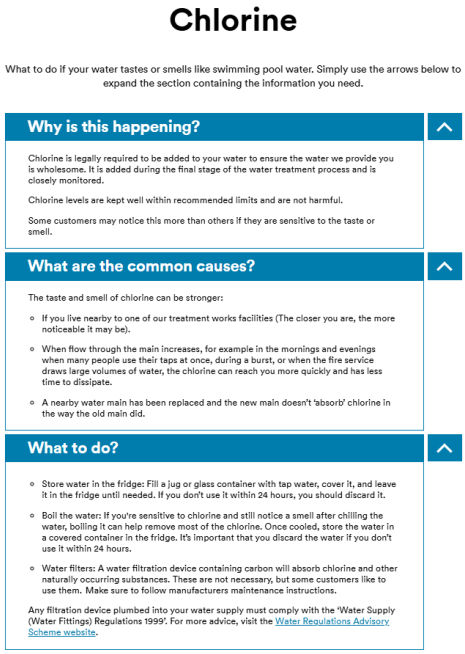
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

12a. [If yes to Q12] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

Below is the page you would follow if your water tasted/smelt of chlorine

Click on the image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible. Please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your household water quality.



Chlorine

What to do if your water tastes or smells like swimming pool water. Simply use the arrows below to expand the section containing the information you need.

Why is this happening?

Chlorine is legally required to be added to your water to ensure the water we provide you is wholesome. It is added during the final stage of the water treatment process and is closely monitored.

Chlorine levels are kept well within recommended limits and are not harmful.

Some customers may notice this more than others if they are sensitive to the taste or smell.

What are the common causes?

The taste and smell of chlorine can be stronger:

- If you live nearby to one of our treatment works facilities (The closer you are, the more noticeable it may be).
- When flow through the main increases, for example in the mornings and evenings when many people use their taps at once, during a burst, or when the fire service draws large volumes of water, the chlorine can reach you more quickly and has less time to dissipate.
- A nearby water main has been replaced and the new main doesn't 'absorb' chlorine in the way the old main did.

What to do?

- Store water in the fridge: Fill a jug or glass container with tap water, cover it, and leave it in the fridge until needed. If you don't use it within 24 hours, you should discard it.
- Boil the water: If you're sensitive to chlorine and still notice a smell after chilling the water, boiling it can help remove most of the chlorine. Once cooled, store the water in a covered container in the fridge. It's important that you discard the water if you don't use it within 24 hours.
- Water filters: A water filtration device containing carbon will absorb chlorine and other naturally occurring substances. These are not necessary, but some customers like to use them. Make sure to follow manufacturers maintenance instructions.

Any filtration device plumbed into your water supply must comply with the 'Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999'. For more advice, visit the Water Regulations Advisory Scheme website.

13. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right level of information to answer questions I would have if I was experiencing a chlorine taste/smell in my water

14. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

14a. [If yes to Q14] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

Below is the page you would follow if your water tasted/smelt earthy or musty.

15. Click on the image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible. Again, please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your household water quality.

Earthy or musty

An earthy or musty taste or smell can either be caused by how your property is structured, or where your water is originally sourced from.

Follow our advice below to quickly identify the cause and how to resolve it.

Why is this happening?

Long lengths of pipework in large buildings, or pipes that feed into infrequently used taps, water can become stagnant. This can cause a stale or pond-like smell or taste.

An earthy or musty taste and/or smell can sometimes be caused by the harmless algae bacteria or other organic matter in the river or reservoir where your water is sourced from.

What are the common causes?

- **Standing water in pipes:** Water that has been sitting in household plumbing for long periods can take on tastes or smells from the pipe materials.
- **Microbial growth:** Organisms can grow on washers, inside pipes, or within taps, especially if they are not regularly cleaned or used.
- **Pipework layout:** Certain materials or configurations, such as hot and cold pipes running closely together, can encourage bacterial growth, which may affect water quality.
- **Blocked waste pipes:** Smells from your sink plughole may be due to blocked waste pipework and can become noticeable only when the tap is running.

What to do?

Run your tap: Doing this for a few minutes will bring fresh water into your property and flush the system. This will usually resolve the metallic taste or smell. Instead of letting the water go to waste, why not collect it to water your plants with.

Check and clean your fittings: The kinds of bacteria that can cause a musty taste or smell may grow on valves, washers and other fittings. You may need to check they are all compliant with the Water Regulations and replace any if necessary.

Check your hot and cold water pipes aren't touching: The heat transfer between the hot and cold pipes can also cause bacterial growth, so you or a plumber should check that they aren't touching. If they are close together, you may need to insulate or 'lag' your water pipes to stop the transfer of heat.

16. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right level of information to answer questions I would have if I was experiencing an earthy or musty taste/smell in my water

17. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

17a. [If yes to Q17] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

Below is the page you would follow if your water tasted/smelt eggy or like sewage.

18. Click on the image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible. Again, please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your household water quality.

Eggy or sewage

It is a very common misconception when customers detect an eggy or sewage smell when using or drinking water, that the water itself is the cause. More often, it is a nearby plughole or drain, that is causing the smell.

There is a quick and simple test you can do at home which normally establishes where the smell may be coming from.

Quick Test

- Choose a glass container and before you fill it up, make sure it smells normal to you (this ensures your dish washer hasn't left a smell on the glass).
- Then fill up the glass from your cold kitchen tap (To ensure you are testing the water at its point of entry to your property).
- Take this glass of water to a room that has no drains or water supply in it and take a smell of the water.
- By doing this, you have completely isolated the water from any interfering smells and will be able to pinpoint the problem.
- If the smell disappears, then it is likely that the issue isn't with the water itself.

What to do next

If the water didn't smell after the test:

- Try cleaning the sink and overflow with very hot water and bleach. Be sure to follow manufacturer guidance when using bleach and only use cleaning chemicals that are safe for your kitchen surfaces.
- Be sure to throw out old, disposable sponges and dishcloths.

If the smell continues, despite performing the test, and your neighbours are unaffected, contact an approved plumber here.

19. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right level of information to answer questions I would have if I was experiencing an eggy or sewage like taste/smell in my water

20. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

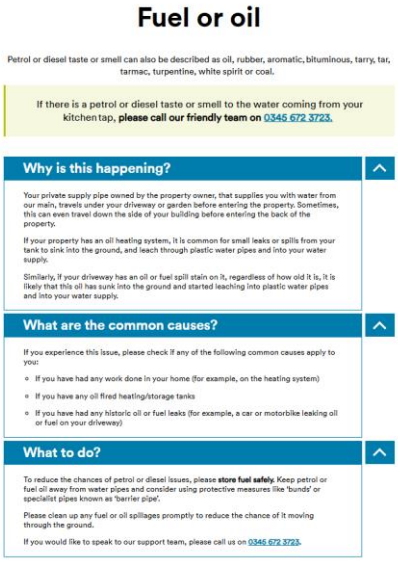
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

20a. [If yes to Q20] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

Below is the page you would follow if your water tasted/smelt like fuel or oil.

21. Click on the image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible. Again, please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your household water quality.



Fuel or oil

Petrol or diesel taste or smell can also be described as oil, rubber, aromatic, bituminous, tarry, tar, tarmac, turpentine, white spirit or coal.

If there is a petrol or diesel taste or smell to the water coming from your kitchen tap, **please call our friendly team on** 0345 672 3723.

Why is this happening?

Your private supply pipe owned by the property owner, that supplies you with water from our main, travels under your driveway or garden before entering the property. Sometimes, this can even travel down the side of your building before entering the back of the property.

If your property has an oil heating system, it is common for small leaks or spills from your tank to sink into the ground, and leach through plastic water pipes and into your water supply.

Similarly, if your driveway has an oil or fuel spill stain on it, regardless of how old it is, it is likely that this oil has sunk into the ground and started leaching into plastic water pipes and into your water supply.

What are the common causes?

If you experience this issue, please check if any of the following common causes apply to you:

- If you have had any work done in your home (for example, on the heating system)
- If you have any oil fired heating/storage tanks
- If you have had any historic oil or fuel leaks (for example, a car or motorbike leaking oil or fuel on your driveway)

What to do?

To reduce the chances of petrol or diesel issues, please **store fuel safely.** Keep petrol or fuel oil away from water pipes and consider using protective measures like 'bunds' or specialist pipes known as 'barrier pipe'.

Please clean up any fuel or oil spillages promptly to reduce the chance of it moving through the ground.

If you would like to speak to our support team, please call us on 0345 672 3723.

22. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right level of information to answer questions I would have if I was experiencing a fuel or oily taste/smell in my water

23. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

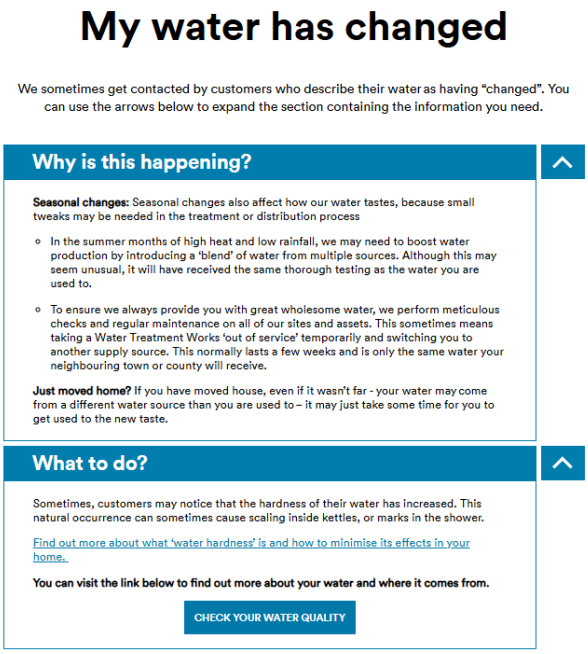
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

23a. [If yes to Q23] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

Below is the page you would follow if your water was different to usual

24. Click on the image of the webpage selecting which parts you like or dislike and when prompted, please tell us why, being as specific as possible. Again, please provide as much detail as possible when answering the questions and take into consideration the tone of the language, how easy it is to understand, the layout and how useful the information provided would be if you were looking to understand your household water quality.



My water has changed

We sometimes get contacted by customers who describe their water as having "changed". You can use the arrows below to expand the section containing the information you need.

Why is this happening?

Seasonal changes: Seasonal changes also affect how our water tastes, because small tweaks may be needed in the treatment or distribution process

- In the summer months of high heat and low rainfall, we may need to boost water production by introducing a 'blend' of water from multiple sources. Although this may seem unusual, it will have received the same thorough testing as the water you are used to.
- To ensure we always provide you with great wholesome water, we perform meticulous checks and regular maintenance on all of our sites and assets. This sometimes means taking a Water Treatment Works 'out of service' temporarily and switching you to another supply source. This normally lasts a few weeks and is only the same water your neighbouring town or county will receive.

Just moved home? If you have moved house, even if it wasn't far - your water may come from a different water source than you are used to – it may just take some time for you to get used to the new taste.

What to do?

Sometimes, customers may notice that the hardness of their water has increased. This natural occurrence can sometimes cause scaling inside kettles, or marks in the shower.

Find out more about what 'water hardness' is and how to minimise its effects in your home.

You can visit the link below to find out more about your water and where it comes from.

CHECK YOUR WATER QUALITY

25. Using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- The language is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is just right
- It provides the right level of information to answer questions I would have if I thought my water was different to usual

26. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

26a. [If yes to Q26] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

27. Taking all into account, using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements after reviewing the 'unusual taste/smell' section of the webpage?

- The language used is easy to understand
- The tone of the language is 'just right'
- The layout makes it easy to access the relevant information
- It provides the correct level of information to help me navigate to the relevant part of the webpage
- It provides all the relevant information I would need if I was experiencing issues with the taste/smell of my water

28. Do you feel there is any content missing from this section of the webpage?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

28a. [If yes to Q28] What content do you think should be included?

- Open

29. Is there anything on this webpage that you did not understand?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

29a. [If yes to Q29] Please specify the aspects of the webpage you found difficult to understand?

- Open

29b. [If yes to Q29] Where might you go to find any missing information?

- Look further into the website
- Call United Utilities
- Search elsewhere online
- Other (Please specify)

Outro

For ITF:

Thank you for taking part in our survey - to enter into a prize draw to win 1 of 4 £25 Love2Shop vouchers, please **enter your email** below and click **submit**!

For panel:

Thank you for taking part in our survey. This research is hugely important to United Utilities and will help shape the information used on the 'United Utilities' website.

If you are interested in learning more about United Utilities or participating in further research, please consider visiting the following link:

In The Flow | United Utilities - Corporate