

Taste and odor can be different for everyone. Some people have heightened senses and can detect even the smallest changes in the taste or smell of their water, while others cannot.

What makes my water smell/taste funny?

Drinking water can pick up tastes and odors from low usage in water systems, new pipes or from natural elements in source water. Taste and odor events often occur seasonally due to the growth of algae and aquatic plants in the warmer seasons. During the treatment process, organic materials are removed from the source water but residual odor can linger. The remaining tastes and odors are natural and not harmful, but we do take steps to minimize their presence.

Why does my water have a chemical/chlorine smell?

If the smell of the water is described as chemical, bleach-like or chlorine-like, you are smelling the chlorine that is used as the primary disinfectant for our water. In the wintertime, lower consumption of water can heighten the smell of chlorine due to less water running through our system as compared to irrigation season. Heightened chlorine and/or mineral odor and taste can also occur if the water treatment plant that supplies water to an area of the city changes (for example, one plant goes offline and another is brought online).

We monitor chlorine throughout our system multiple times a week to ensure it's at safe levels.

Why does the water in only one area of my house smell?

Odor issues that occur in one area of the home could be caused by a problem with a p-trap rather than the water itself. The p-trap is the part of a plumbing drain that helps prevent sewer smells from coming into the home through drains. Smells arise when p-traps dry out.

The solution: First, address the smell by pouring a cup of bleach in the drain to disinfect any bacterial growth. Next, after allowing the bleach to work, flush the drain with at least a gallon of water to rewet the p-trap.

To prevent the issue from recurring, the plumbing fixture should be used at least occasionally to prevent the p-trap from drying out.

Other causes of taste and odor issues:

Water taste can vary slightly across our system depending on which treatment plant the water comes from (we operate six treatment plants across our system). That's because the plants receive raw water from different sources and the blending of those sources can vary.

Algae growth is a natural occurrence in some of our source waters. It can impact taste and odor slightly, as well. We carefully monitor algae growth to ensure that the water is still a safe source to use for drinking water.

Dead-end water mains can also be a source of taste and odor. Organic material that is naturally occurring in the water can gather at a dead end and cause an earthy or musty taste and odor.

Please reach out to us if you have this kind of taste/odor and suspect your service line is tapped from a dead-end water main area. We can verify if this is the case and, if so, we will come out to alleviate the issue.

If you have concerns about the taste or smell of your water, please contact our customer service department at 448-4800 or email waterquality@csu.org.