# Brown water – Not my cup of tea!

Sometimes customers notice that their tap water has a brownish, yellow, or rusty color. The off-color is often first noticed against a white container, such as a sink, bathtub, or toilet, and usually appears suddenly. In most areas of Broomfield, brown water episodes are localized and temporary, generally caused by some nearby activity. The following discussion covers some of the causes, effects and cures for brown water episodes.

**What causes brown water?**

"Brown" or discolored water is caused by deposits, sediment, or rust that may have accumulated in the water mains over time. Any activity that jars the pipes or results in a rapid change in water pressure can cause a temporary discoloration of the water. Such activities include water main repairs, construction, and opening or closing a fire hydrant or valve. Hydrants are commonly opened to flush a water main after repair, address a water quality problem, fill a street sweeper or other mobile tank, or to exercise the valves to ensure fire protection. City crews try to flush all of the water mains at least annually as part of our preventive maintenance program. The schedule for any planned flushing program is publicized in advance to alert residents to possible water quality effects in their neighborhood.

Some parts of the city, especially older areas, are served by iron water mains that have become rusty over time. To correct this problem, corrosion-resistant pipes are now used in the distribution system; the older water mains will be upgraded as they are replaced.

**Is it safe to drink?**

There is no indication that the water is unsafe. However, in the event of an unusual episode of discolored water, we recommend that customers avoid drinking the water until the appearance has returned to normal. It's also best to postpone doing laundry until the water has cleared up because the residue can stain clothing.

**How can I get rid of it?**

The first step is to flush out the household plumbing. This is best accomplished by turning on several cold water taps and letting them run full-force for 10 to 20 minutes. We don't recommend running the hot water – it may draw the sediment into the water heater. If the problem doesn't clear up, wait about 30 minutes and flush the taps again. If the water still appears discolored, call the Water Treatment Facility at (303) 464-5600.

**Doesn't flushing the water mains and household plumbing waste water?**

Although the city encourages responsible water use, achieving and maintaining good water quality must sometimes take precedence over conservation. Any water used beneficially is not truly wasted, and flushing water mains and home plumbing is sometimes necessary. At home, you can conserve by flushing the taps into large containers and using the water for plants, or by using the sprinklers or garden hose to flush the pipes and water the lawn or garden at the same time.

Environmental Services
Public Works

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