



Discolored or Sediment in Tap Water

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When the water from your faucet is discolored or has particles, it may be the result of a disturbance in the water distribution system. Even though your water is filtered either at the treatment plant or in the aquifer, a very fine layer of minerals or other sediments can develop in the water mains over time. Disturbances caused by hydrant use, opening or closing valves, water main breaks, high water usage, loss of pressure or construction can stir up these sediments and cause the water to become discolored. Usually the water will clear on its own within a few hours. If your water is discolored:

1. Call your water system to report the issue, they can advise you if there is a water treatment issue or water main break. Please follow any issued Boil Water Advisories or recommendations from your water provider.
2. Although It may not be harmful, KDHE does not advise drinking any obviously discolored or dirty water. Especially infants, children and those with compromised immune systems. Refrain from washing clothes as the minerals in the water could permanently stain materials. It is acceptable to use this water to flush toilets or other non-potable water uses. Avoid using hot water until the pipes clear. Adding sediment to your hot water tank could shorten it's useful life. If your water system indicates a line break or other issue, flushing you building plumbing should not be started until after the water main serving the service connection has been thoroughly flushed by the public water supply system's operating staff. Follow the KDHE Flushing Guidance found on this website.
3. If your cold water is reddish brown, rusty, blackish or has dark particles, it is most likely iron and/or manganese mineralization dislodged from the water mains. Black particles or discolored water from hot water faucets only may indicate a hot water tank issue. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has established a secondary standard of 0.3 mg/L (parts per million – ppm) for iron and 0.05 mg/L (ppm) for manganese. Secondary standards are non-enforceable guidelines for contaminants that may cause cosmetic effects (such as skin or tooth discoloration) or aesthetic effects (such as taste, odor, or color) in drinking water. Additional information on drinking water standards may be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/dwregdev/drinking-water-regulations-and-contaminants>
4. Another source of black particles is disintegration of toilet flappers, rubber faucet washers, o-rings, membranes in thermal expansion tanks on water heaters, and liners of flexible hoses. If you have a filter system, black particles could be carbon filter medium.
5. If your cold water is cloudy or milky, it is most likely entrained air bubbles. To determine if it is entrained air, fill a glass with water and let it stand for a few seconds. If the water clears from the bottom toward the top, the milky color is just the oxygen bubbles. Running the faucet for several minutes should clear the water.
6. If your cold water is green or greenish blue, this may indicate deterioration of copper plumbing. KDHE recommends checking with a licensed plumber to find the source of deterioration and a possible solution.
7. White particles usually form on hot water fixtures and are most likely calcium carbonate or zinc oxide from lime rich water or zinc leached from brass fixtures.
8. Black/grey or pink/orange slime on faucets or fixtures can be caused by bacteria, mold and fungi that grow where water is exposed to air (e.g., in a toilet bowl or shower). These growths are produced by airborne fungal spores or bacteria (not from drinking water). We recommend scrubbing and cleaning the toilet, shower, etc. with bleach. Ventilation and wiping damp areas can help reduce these growths.

Please contact your public water supply system if you have additional questions.