



Discolored Water

Discolored water results when water traveling through the water mains reaches high enough velocities to stir the sediment lying in the bottom of the water mains. Water main breaks, fire fighting activities, and extremely high system demand are typical causes of discolored water. There are no health risks associated with this type of problem, as the particulate matter causing the discoloration is not harmful. If you experience this problem, the easiest way to eliminate the discolored water from your system is to run as many cold water faucets, including bath tubs, sinks, and outside spigots, as possible at the same time. This will create a high enough flow rate from the water main to your home to clear out any sediment which may have found its way into your service line. If the problem does not clear up within a few minutes, it is possible that the sediment in the water main has not settled out yet. In this case, wait an hour or so and try it again.

Discolored water caused by iron and manganese oxide sediment is safe to drink. During such discolored water episodes, your water continues to meet all State and Federal drinking water standards for public health and safety. The Portsmouth Water Division periodically flushes its water mains to remove sediment, which helps to minimize discolored water episodes.

If your drinking water becomes discolored, avoid using your washing machine and dishwasher until the water clears. To remove the discoloration, flush the pipes in your house using the following procedure:

1. Run a cold water faucet at full force for a few minutes or until the water clears. If the water does not clear after a few minutes, wait another hour and repeat the process until the water is clear at the outside front hose faucet.

2. If necessary, remove faucet aerators and clear any particles and then reinstall them.

If the water still fails to clear, contact the Portsmouth Water Division at (603) 427-1530.

If discolored water has been drawn into the hot water system, the hot water can continue to be used until the discoloration dissipates and is no longer an aesthetic issue. This is generally preferred to draining and refilling the water heater which may require expert help (calling a plumber).