

TESTING YOUR WATER QUALITY

THE TEST	FURTHER INFORMATION	OFFICIAL STANDARD	UNITS
Alkalinity	Occurs naturally where water passes through chalk or limestone.	No standard	mg/l
Aluminium	Found naturally in all water sources and is used in the treatment process but is effectively removed and carefully monitored at the water treatment works.	200	µgAl/l
Ammonium	Is naturally present in some supplies.	0.5	mgNH ₄ /l
Antimony	Not normally found.	5	µgSb/l
Arsenic	Not normally present. Very low levels appear naturally.	10	µgAs/l
Boron	Occurs naturally.	1	mgB/l
Cadmium	Not normally present. Very low levels appear naturally.	5	µgCd/l
Calcium	Occurs naturally especially if water passes through limestone or chalk.	No standard	mgCa/l
Chloride	Occurs naturally.	250	mgCl/l
Chlorine	Small amounts of chlorine are added to our water to kill any harmful bacteria. Its use was responsible for helping eliminate diseases such as typhoid and cholera. Occasionally customers may notice a slight chlorine taste but this is completely harmless. (World Health Organisation guideline value - 5mg/l)	No standard	mgCl ₂ /l
Chromium	Not normally present. Very low levels appear naturally.	50	µgCr/l
<i>Clostridium perfringens</i>	Groups of bacteria indicating possible faecal contamination of water supplies. An occurrence of <i>Clostridium perfringens</i> is always investigated immediately.	0	per 100ml
Coliform bacteria (total coliforms)	These bacteria indicate that the supply may have been contaminated. In most cases this is from the tap itself and may be present because of normal domestic operations. We recommend that taps, including the inside of the spout, are cleaned regularly. An occurrence of coliform bacteria is always investigated immediately.	0	per 100ml
Colony counts 2 days at 37° C	This is a measure of a number of groups of naturally occurring bacteria and is not indicative of any health hazard. However, unusually high numbers are investigated.	No abnormal change	per ml
Colony counts 3 days at 22° C			
Colour	Water may occasionally have a slight tint which is caused by natural colouring such as peat.	20	mg/1 Pt/Co scale
Conductivity	A measure of the dissolved mineral content of the water.	2500	µS/cm
Copper	Presence is largely due to the influence of domestic plumbing systems.	2	mgCu/l
Cyanide	Not normally present. Very low levels appear naturally.	50	µgCN/l
<i>E. coli</i> Enterococci	Groups of bacteria indicating possible faecal contamination of water supplies. An occurrence of <i>E. coli</i> or Enterococci is always investigated immediately.	0	per 100ml
Fluoride	Occurs naturally in some of our supplies. In other areas fluoride is added at the treatment works at the request of the Health Authority to protect the teeth of children.	1.5	mgF/l
pH (Hydrogen ion)	The pH of water is controlled at the treatment works to prevent corrosion of pipes and fittings.	>6.5, <9.5	pH value
Iron	Occurs naturally and is removed at the treatment works. However, some mains are made from cast iron and may corrode to give the water a rust coloured appearance which, while undesirable, is not a health hazard.	200	µgFe/l
Lead	Many homes still have lead pipes and it is normally in these properties where the standard is exceeded. Mains water contains little or no lead.	10	µgPb/l
Magnesium	Occurs naturally as a result of passage of water through the ground.	No standard	µg/l

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Manganese	Occurs naturally, may build up on corrosion products within mains and is carefully monitored at treatment works.	50	µgMn/l
Mercury	Very low levels appear naturally.	1	µgHg/l
Nickel	Not normally present. Very low levels appear naturally.	20	µgNi/l
Nitrate	Occurs naturally from both mineral or soil processes and from agricultural activity.	50	mg/NO ₃ /l
Nitrite	May be associated with the presence of ammonia or nitrate in river water.	0.5	mg/NO ₂ /l
Odour (Quantitative)	As well as chemical tests, we also use a team of experienced testers, who compare the sample with one which is known to be free from taste or smell, and they give the water a rating which reflects how good or bad it is. Any abnormal change detected in odour/taste will be investigated by the company.	Any positive detection	Dilution No. (at 25° C)
Odour (Qualitative)	Subjective assessment of the type and magnitude of such characteristics.	No standard	
PAH	Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons associated with fossil fuels and if found in water they often originate from coal tar linings in old mains.	0.1	µg/l
Benzo (a) pyrene	An individual Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon similar to those detailed above.	0.010	µg/l
Individual pesticides	The presence of these compounds is due to their use by farmers, industry and local authorities etc. The current standard is not health based and therefore minor incidents where the standard is exceeded are unlikely to represent a risk to health.	0.1	µg/l
Total pesticides	The sum of the above.	0.5	µg/l
Aldrin Dieldrin Heptachlor Heptachlorepoide	These pesticides have a lower standard than the other pesticides detailed above.	0.03	µg/l
Phosphorus	Occurs naturally as well as in fertilisers and detergents but rarely proves a problem in our supply. Phosphorus is dosed to control lead concentrations from private plumbing.	No standard	mgP/l
Selenium	Not normally found.	10	µgSe/l
Sodium	Occurs naturally as a result of passage of water through the ground.	200	mgNa/l
Sulphate	Occurs naturally as a result of passage of water through the ground.	250	mgSO ₄ /l
Taste (Quantitative)	As well as chemical tests, we also use a team of experienced testers, who compare the sample with one which is known to be free from taste or smell, and they give the water a rating which reflects how good or bad it is. Any abnormal change detected in odour/taste will be investigated by the company.	Any positive detection	Dilution No. (at 25° C)
Taste (Qualitative)	Subjective assessment of the type and magnitude of such characteristics.	No standard	
Temperature	During warm spells the temperature of tap water will increase, changing its familiar taste slightly but not its quality. If this occurs you should chill drinking water in the fridge.	No standard	deg. C
Tetrachloroethane Trichloroethane Tetrachloromethane	Chlorinated solvents which are used in industry and dry-cleaning processes and should not usually be found in the water supply.	(Combined standard of 10) 3	µg/l µg/l
Total hardness	Occurs naturally where water passes through chalk or limestone.	No standards	mg/l
TOC	Total Organic Carbon content of the water and a measure of effectiveness of treatment in removing natural organic compounds from the supply.	No abnormal change	mg/l
Total Trihalomethanes	Formed when chlorine is added to water as a disinfectant and reacts with organic substances. The standard is set well below the level at which it might cause health problems.	100	µg/l
Turbidity	This is the clarity of the water which can be affected by minute air bubbles or finely suspended particles. If you allow a glass of water to stand for a few minutes it will normally clear.	4	NTU
Zinc	Its presence is largely due to the influence of domestic plumbing systems.	No standard	µgZn/l

µg - microgrammes or one part per billion = one drop in an olympic sized swimming pool.

mg - milligrammes or one part per million = one drop in 100 litres.