

The quality of drinking water



Quality of mains water

We deal with questions about drinking water. Mains water must meet certain legal standards. We monitor the results of tests carried out by the water company, Essex and Suffolk Water.

Characteristics

The most common enquiries relate to the taste, smell or appearance of drinking water (for example, a chlorine or bleach taste). The main reason for this type of complaint is the treatment Essex and Suffolk Water use to keep the water safe to drink. Although some people can taste the chlorine in the water, it is not harmful.

Water hardness

The water in the area is naturally hard which means that it has a lot of minerals dissolved in it. You will notice a white substance that builds up in kettles, around tap nozzles and on areas where taps continually run or drip. You may also notice a 'scum' on the surface of a hot drink and feel the taste is suffering as a result. Hard water is not harmful to health. People moving into the area from an area where the water is soft often notice the most difference.

Particles in water

People sometimes notice small particles in their water. These usually arise from local conditions. An investigation will need to be carried out to find the cause.

For more information and advice on the taste, smell or appearance of water, phone **Essex and Suffolk Water on 0845 782 0999**.

If you want to know more in general about the quality of drinking water, you can get a free report for the area your home is in by contacting Essex and Suffolk Water.

Lead

If your home was built before 1970 you could have lead water pipes and have concerns about possible lead levels in your drinking water. In fact, the hardness of the water means that the inside the pipes is coated with limescale, so lead is generally not found in the mains supply unless work has recently been carried out on the water pipes. This may temporarily cause higher than normal levels of lead in the water.

If you find out that you have lead pipes, each morning you should let the tap run for several minutes before you use the water.

You are responsible for replacing any lead pipe in your home after the stop tap. If you do this, the water company may have to replace any lead pipes between the water main in the street and your stop tap.

Essex and Suffolk Water can test your water supply for levels of lead.

Alleged illness

People sometimes believe their drinking water causes stomach upsets or other symptoms. This is very rare (unless you have a private water supply from your own well or borehole) because our mains water supply is treated with chlorine to kill any organisms that could cause infection.

If you have symptoms that continue or get worse, you should see a doctor. In these circumstances you can ask Essex and Suffolk Water to test the water.

Essex and Suffolk Water will normally take a sample from the manhole on the street as well as from your home.

Random samples

Essex and Suffolk Water frequently take

random samples from kitchen taps to check the quality of the water. These samples sometimes have bacteria in them. Essex and Suffolk Water tells us about this, and we may contact you to give you advice.

The usual reason for bacteria in water is a build-up of bacteria in the tap itself. This problem can be solved by taking the tap apart and cleaning it properly with a solution of bleach and water, then fitting a new washer. Experience has shown that after this work, the water is usually clear of any bacteria.

Private water supplies

Private water supplies are those which are not controlled by a water company, and include supplies from springs, lakes, ponds, wells and boreholes. Only a small percentage of the population gets its drinking water in this way.

Many private water supplies are not treated and may become contaminated from the surrounding land or in storage tanks.

Contamination can be caused by flooding after heavy rainfall (this may wash contaminants from the land into your supply), grazing animals (including pests) and farming activities.

If you are not sure about the safety of a private water supply, **do not drink the water**. If possible, use bottled water.

We can arrange for a sample of water from your private supply to be tested. This service is usually free.

An officer will visit your home and take a number of samples to test. In some cases it may be necessary to disinfect the tap before the sample is taken.

You will be told the results of the test and what action needs to be taken.

Please contact us if you would like more advice on private water supplies.

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If you would like this information in large print, Braille or another language phone us on

01702 318111