

The Problems

- Does your drinking water have an unpleasant taste or odor?
- Does it smell like rotten eggs when you turn the tap on?
- Do you have a black or dark substance staining your laundry or bathroom fixtures?

The Causes

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, there are 2 likely causes:

- Many people don't realize that their water heater is causing a bad odor in their tap water.
- Sometimes unpleasant odors come from elements found in nature, such as hydrogen sulfide.

Hot or Cold Water?

The first thing you should do is to find out if the problem lies in your water heater. If the bad smell occurs *only when the hot water is running*, the culprit is likely your water heater.

Water heaters are often turned down to avoid scalding. However, this can allow certain odor-causing bacteria to thrive. Try turning the water heater up to the recommended temperature (usually 160° F) for eight hours. *Caution: to avoid scalding*, ensure the pressure relief valve is working properly before turning up the temperature.

If that doesn't solve the problem, try replacing the magnesium anode with one made of aluminum or zinc. These materials do not react to form hydrogen sulfide the way magnesium does.

Hydrogen Sulfide

Hydrogen sulfide gas is something that occurs naturally and dissolves easily in water. It can also be formed due to chemical reactions in your plumbing, particularly inside your water heater. Hydrogen sulfide is easily identified by a "rotten egg" smell.

If your tap water comes from a well, it is not uncommon for it to have hydrogen sulfide in it.

Hydrogen sulfide is not harmful to consume. Rest assured, the City of Paul performs rigorous testing before it distributes water to your house. The City takes pride in supplying your family with safe water to drink.

However, if odor problems occur in both hot and cold water and have just started recently, the plumbing in your home could have bacteria in it.

Treatment

The City of Paul gets its drinking water from wells. The City disinfects the water to kill anything that may be harmful to your health. The City also regularly flushes the piping that carries the water to your home.

If hydrogen sulfide odors are bothersome to you, there are a few things you can do.

- Install a carbon filter on your tap, such as a Brita filter. This will remove low to moderate hydrogen sulfide levels.
- Install an aerator to add air to your water; this will convert sulfide to sulfate, which has no odor.
- Chlorine can be added to water to convert sulfide into a tasteless form. *It can also be used to kill odor-causing bacteria living in your pipes.*
- Contact your local health department to find out how to kill bacteria in your pipes with chlorine.

If you still have questions or concerns, please contact the Paul City Hall.

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The Truth About Taste and Odor in Drinking Water



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