



## Water Heaters

Water heaters are a major part of a household water system and it is important to properly maintain these systems.

Sediment, corrosion and bacterial growth can build up in hot water systems causing unusual odors that smell like rotten eggs, burnt matches or sewage.

A decline in water pressure can be a sign that the water heater may require maintenance. Contact a licensed plumber or follow the manufacturer's instructions to flush and drain your water heater annually. Also check the condition of the heater's *dip tube*, which is the component that carries incoming cold water to the bottom of the tank.

It is important to follow the instructions on setting the water heater temperature. A temperature set below the manufacturer recommendations can allow bacteria to grow. Temperatures that are too high can cause scalding.

Tankless hot water heaters can help minimize water heater concerns, but can allow particles to build up in systems with high levels of calcium carbonate – also known as water hardness. You may need to pretreat your household water with a water softener.

## Where to get more information

- City of Longview, Utilities Divisions, (360) 442-5700
- Washington State Department of Health, Office of Drinking Water  
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/DrinkingWater.aspx>
- US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Water Health Series and Water on Tap ([www.epa.gov/safewater](http://www.epa.gov/safewater))
- EPA's WaterSense for helpful information on water-efficient products for the home ([www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense))
- American Water Works Association's (AWWA's) consumer website, [www.DrinkTap.org](http://www.DrinkTap.org)
- AWWA's Brochure on household backflow prevention, *Backflow prevention is a two-way proposition* <http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/documents/4200/contamination.pdf>

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Utilities Divisions

## Meter to Tap

Maintaining Water Quality in Household Plumbing



**Flushing Your Household Plumbing** - flush water throughout your house by opening cold water faucets one at a time starting with the lowest floor (such as the basement) up to the highest floor in your house. Do not flush a hot water faucet until the cold water system has been flushed.



### Did you know . . .

After water from your water utility enters your home, conditions in your home plumbing system can affect the water's quality.

Your water utility wants to help you maintain high-quality water throughout your household plumbing system. Use this brochure yourself, or use it to work with a licensed plumber, to inspect your cold and hot water plumbing systems and identify areas for improvement.

Follow the 10 simple tips to help ensure your tap water quality and understand how water quality is affected by the plumbing conditions in your home.

Older pipes are at greater risk of leaking, corroding or releasing metals such as iron, lead, copper or zinc into your water. Have a plumber help you consider whether you should remove lead pipes and solder, and flush your system.

Milky or white colored water that does not dissipate upon sitting in a glass could be caused by old galvanized pipe that requires replacement. The type of pipe in your plumbing may vary throughout your house. Also, the connection of different pipe materials (such as galvanized and copper pipe) can contribute to corrosion of the pipe and a buildup of metal particles in water.

Minimal or no household water usage can cause water quality problems at the tap, such as discolored water and musty odors. To minimize water quality changes, flush cold water taps when household water is not used for long periods of time. This brings fresh water in from the main in the street.



### Your Water Service Pipe

The *water service line* is the pipe that connects the water main outside your home to your household plumbing. The water service pipe is owned by you and you should determine your water service pipe material. If it is lead or galvanized you should consider replacing the pipe. A leaking water service pipe should be replaced immediately.

### Top Plumbing tips for Homeowners

1. Learn about your tap water's quality. Review the water quality report issued every year by your water utility.
2. Use cold tap water for drinking and food preparation.
3. Maintain home water treatment systems, including filters, treatment devices and water softeners, as recommended by the manufacturer.
4. Use water taps regularly. Flush cold water taps by opening faucets throughout your home for several minutes when water has not been used for several days.
5. Be sure the plumbing system is constructed properly, including the installation of appropriate backflow protection.
6. Replace old plumbing, especially lead-containing and galvanized plumbing material.
7. Flush cold water taps following household plumbing construction or repair.
8. Drain and flush your hot water heater annually.
9. Maintain the hot water heater's temperature as recommended by the manufacturer.
10. Take action when you experience a change in the taste, smell or color of your water, or notice particles in your water or stains on fixtures and laundry.

