

Discolouration of surfaces, fixtures and fittings

Customers sometimes notice discolouration or deposits on surfaces, fixtures and fittings in areas where water is present, which raises concerns about the quality of their supply. Discolouration is normally caused by airborne fungal spores, bacteria or algae which are naturally present in the environment and are not connected with the mains water supply.

Although chlorine is added to drinking water it naturally dissipates when exposed to air, diminishing its protection against micro-organisms, which can then form colonies or 'biofilms'. These colonies are usually visible due to their colouring.

Bacteria may produce a slime which can build up to form a black sludge. These biofilms can develop in cold water taps, shower heads, waste traps in sink drainers and in toilet cisterns and bowls.

Plumbing fittings, including tap spouts, should be regularly and thoroughly cleaned using a mild disinfectant. Taps used for drinking water should then be run for a few moments to remove disinfectant.

Green algal growths may appear in filter jugs, vases and pet water bowls if they are left in sunlight.

Filter jugs should be kept in the refrigerator away from heat and light sources. Water should be changed regularly and the jug cleaned frequently. Cleaning pet bowls regularly will prevent algal growths.

Black biofilms can occur in washing machines, in the powder draw and on the door seal. Washing machine doors should be left open to enable some air to circulate; in addition to mopping up any standing water this may help to alleviate the problem.

Fungi commonly form pink or black biofilms on shower curtains and on tile grouting. These stains can be difficult to remove entirely but regular cleaning of affected surfaces with proprietary cleaners or dilute bleach will aid their removal. If growths are not removed regularly then permanent staining of some materials may occur.

Further advice

If you have any further queries regarding water quality or require further information, please contact us on the freephone number below.

Customer services helpline: 0800 169 1144, Minicom: 0800 169 9965

Relevant facts:

Chlorine is a very effective disinfectant, it is added to drinking water to ensure that it does not contain any harmful micro-organisms.

A low level of chlorine remains in the water supply throughout the distribution system to maintain its protection.

Filter cartridges should be changed according to the manufacturer's guidelines in order to maintain its effectiveness and cleanliness.

Running washing cycles at lower temperatures saves energy but can **promote the growth of bacteria** inside the machine, occasional use at 60°C should help to avoid this.

Closing doors and windows through the winter restricts air movement, leading to **ideal conditions for growth of biofilm**, particularly in kitchens and bathrooms.

Improving ventilation can assist in minimising the problem associated with surface staining; opening a window following showering or cooking, keeping 'trickle vents' open in the double-glazing, installing an extractor fan or using a dehumidifier will help.