

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT DRINKING WATER

Where does my water come from?

The source of all our drinking water is Lake Michigan. The water is treated using an Ultrafiltration Membrane System and we produce 1.4 billion gallons annually.

What is the hardness of our water?

The hardness of our water is 7.5 grains per gallon or 130 mg/l of calcium carbonate.

Why do I detect a chlorine smell in the water?

Chlorine is added to the water as it leaves the Water Plant and enters the distribution system. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency requires that we maintain a chlorine residual in the distribution system to protect the water as it passes through the pipes to your home.

Why does water sometimes have a musty, earthy taste and odor?

During the summer months, as the lake water temperature increases, tastes and odors are more noticeable. This is generally the result of compounds produced by blue-green algae and other vegetation found in Lake Michigan that can cause a musty, earthy taste to the water. These compounds are not harmful and refrigerating the water or using a carbon filter water pitcher may help to minimize the taste and odors.

Do I need a water filter?

No. The water is purified using an Ultrafiltration Membrane System and is safe to drink. Daily tests are taken to ensure that we meet all the Environmental Protection Agency parameters. If you are sensitive to chlorine or don't like the taste, a carbon filter will take out all of the chlorine. Chlorine will evaporate if you fill a pitcher of water and leave it in the refrigerator overnight.

Why does my tap water look cloudy in the winter?

During the winter we receive a few calls of cloudy water. This occurs when the water temperature of the lake drops below 40°F. When the water is cold, it contains a relatively high level of dissolved oxygen. As the water moves through the mains and the pipes in your house, it is under pressure and the oxygen remains in the water. When you relieve the pressure by opening the faucet and filling your glass with water, the oxygen is now free to escape, giving it a milky appearance. If this occurs, simply put the glass down and let it sit for a few minutes. If the cloudiness goes away, it is entrapped oxygen.

A background image showing water splashing upwards, creating a misty spray against a light blue background. The water droplets are captured in mid-air, creating a sense of motion and freshness.

What is the pink stuff that shows up in my sink, faucets, and tub?

Stains that appear around plumbing fixtures which are frequently wet are not caused by the water. They are caused by airborne bacteria, mold, and mildew. These are called biological growths and usually occur more in the summer time. Dry areas will not support this growth. To minimize this bacteriological growth, ventilate and dry areas shortly after use. Frequent cleaning is another way to minimize these growths.

Does our water contain fluoride?

The Illinois Department of Public Health requires that we add fluoride to the drinking water to help prevent tooth decay and promote strong teeth for children up to the age of 8. In Lake Forest, we add between 0.9 and 1.2 parts per million of fluoride to the drinking water. Multiple tests are taken daily to ensure a proper feed rate. Since 1991 we have had perfect compliance with the Department of Public Health for the addition of fluoride to the drinking water.

Why are there water restrictions?

The Department of Natural Resources and City ordinance mandate that sprinkling restrictions be in effect from May 15 through September 15.

Through September 15, the following sprinkling regulations are in effect:

- Sprinkling is permitted on odd or even days, based on the odd or even last digit of your street address.
- Sprinkling is discouraged between 10:00 a.m. and 6 p.m. because water put on lawns during these hours is quickly evaporated by the afternoon sun.
- Newly installed lawns and landscaping are exempt from these restrictions and may be watered daily for a reasonable period, after installation.

Who do I call for water quality issues?

You can call the Water Plant between the hours of 6:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at 847-810-4650 to inquire about water quality issues.