

Drinking Water

Taste the facts

Why does my drinking water have a taste?

All water contains natural minerals such as calcium, iron and magnesium. Without these elements it would taste just like distilled water, flat and unappetising.

Why does it taste different in different places?

Severn Trent Water treats water drawn from a variety of sources; boreholes, rivers and reservoirs. A third of all potable water supplies in Severn Trent Water are derived from groundwaters – the same as most bottled water. Each source subtly influences the taste. Some people can notice these differences when travelling or when they move house. Boreholes are usually driven hundreds of metres beneath the ground to reach the water which has filtered down through the many layers of rock. Being so thoroughly and slowly filtered by nature, usually only minimum treatment is needed after it is pumped to the surface.

Before reaching rivers and reservoirs, rain water passes over the land. This can give a slight, but distinctly earthy taste. Although such tastes are harmless they are often unwelcome. Water treatment deals with such natural but sometimes unwelcome tastes.

Ensuring drinking water safety

Worldwide, chlorine is the most widely used disinfectant to eliminate harmful bacteria from drinking water. When added to water in minute quantities, chlorine ensures your drinking water remains safe on the journey through the many miles of pipes to your taps.

Chlorine levels are kept to a minimum necessary to ensure your protection from harmful bacteria. Nevertheless, some people can detect even the most minute trace of chlorine in their drinking water. Plastic-bodied

kettles and plumbing fittings can sometimes worsen the effect. Keeping a jug of fresh tap water in your fridge for a few hours will help to reduce the chlorine taste.

New technologies

Treatment processes are used which best treat the particular characteristics of water from different sources. We have already introduced many new technologies such as activated carbon filtration to most of our surface water treatment works and these have already helped improve the taste of drinking water. We also have invested in new improved chlorine control systems to allow us to reduce the amount of chlorine added and to keep concentrations stable. Some chlorine is still needed to protect the water on its long journey to your tap.

Your water safe in our hands

Our overriding concern is to protect your health. The disappearance of once commonplace waterborne diseases is testimony to the disinfecting value of chlorine in the water supply. For instance, the last major UK outbreak of typhoid was more than 60 years ago. Disinfection systems at that time were less developed and reliable.

Severn Trent Water carry out over 500,000 tests to assess compliance with drinking water quality standards each year.

Consistently, over 99.9% of these tests passed all UK Government and EC standards, recognised as among the toughest in the world.

Whilst we hope you'll continue to take quality of drinking water for granted, you can be assured that we don't. Severn Trent Water works to provide you with a high quality water service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and will continue to do so.