

Facts on Aluminium

Aluminium in the diet

Aluminium is one of the most common elements in the earth's crust and is naturally present in many foodstuffs as well as drinking water. Government experts estimate that we all take in around six milligrammes every day. One of the most common sources is tea, a cup of which contains up to 200 times more aluminium than the water from which it is made. Typical levels in water contribute to only 3% of our daily intake.

Aluminium in water

Aluminium salts are used at some treatment plants to purify the water. In particular it is an important step in removing particles, including harmful bacteria and other harmful micro-organisms. Nearly all the aluminium is removed at the waterworks, along with the impurities, before it goes into the water mains to our homes. Other purification chemicals can be used, but they are not suitable for some types of untreated water.

What are the standards for aluminium in water?

The UK standard for aluminium is 200 parts per billion (ug/l), or 200 millionths of a gram per litre of water. This is set to prevent any potential discolouration of the water in the mains and is not based on any concern for health.

What are the levels in Severn Trent Water supplies?

Our treatment processes are operated to keep aluminium levels as low as practicable, which is well below the UK and European standard.

Is aluminium harmful to health?

There has been public concern about a possible link between aluminium and Alzheimers disease, a form of senile dementia. Medical experts advise that recent studies about such links are too tentative to justify any changes in the use of aluminium compounds and there is no proven health risk. This has been endorsed by a recent World Health Organisation review.

What is Severn Trent Water doing about aluminium?

We take any suggestion of a health risk very seriously. In conjunction with other water companies we continue to monitor all new research very carefully and seek the best advice. In the meantime, we are continuously reviewing alternative chemicals and whether they can be successfully used in our treatment works. Severn Trent aims to keep aluminium levels as low as is practicable and usually well below the UK standard.