



# Looking after water in your home

## FOREWORD

**T**he quality of drinking water in the UK is consistently amongst the best in the world. Compliance with standards exceeds 99.9% and where improvements are needed these are taken on by a combination of regulatory and non-regulatory measures. The net effect being billions of pounds invested into driving improvements to the benefit of all water consumers.

However the industry is aware that it cannot rest on its laurels. There are always new threats to drinking water supplies as our raw water resources are subject to discharges from agriculture, from urban areas and from industry. Increasing populations and variable weather patterns lead to increasing demands for water that may be less reliable in its availability. Standards are rightly being tightened where needed to protect the health of the nation and to ensure that confidence in tap water is maintained.

There are many actions water companies take – from working in the catchment to reduce pollution loading, to investing in the latest and most innovative treatment options, ensuring that the system of pipes bring that water to your homes is in good condition – to make sure that the water that arrives at your property is wholesome and safe to drink.

However once water leaves these pipes and enters your home there is a job for the homeowner to do to ensure that when you drink it or cook with it or bathe in it, it is still of the highest quality.

The water industry has produced this simple guide of household tips to help you enjoy the quality of tap water once it reaches your home and to answer questions relating to water and hygiene issues in the home.

This leaflet provides advice to homes connected to the public water supply. In the UK around 1 million homes are supplied from private supplies and the advice contained in the leaflet, whilst broadly useful, may not be wholly relevant in these cases.

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# RESPONSIBILITY AND APPROVED PRODUCTS

## Responsibility for pipe work

Your home is connected to the water main in the road by a pipe. The majority of properties have a stop tap in a chamber near the boundary of your property and the road – usually in the footpath. There may also be a water meter in this chamber. There should also be an additional stop tap either immediately outside or inside your property. This is the stop tap that you should use if needed.

### Top tip

- **It is a good idea to know where your internal stop tap is and to check that it works. Try closing and opening it. The stop tap can usually be found on the pipe work under the kitchen sink or in a downstairs bathroom or cloakroom, or the cellar if your property has one.**

The part of the service pipe which links the water main in the street to the boundary of your property (often called the communication pipe) belongs to the water company and is their responsibility to operate and maintain.

The part of the service pipe leading from the boundary of your property to the point where it enters your home is your or your landlord's responsibility, as the homeowner, along with all the internal plumbing.

Any leak in your front garden or under your drive is likely therefore to be your or your landlord's responsibility to repair. Water companies may provide some help with repairs on your part of the service pipe.

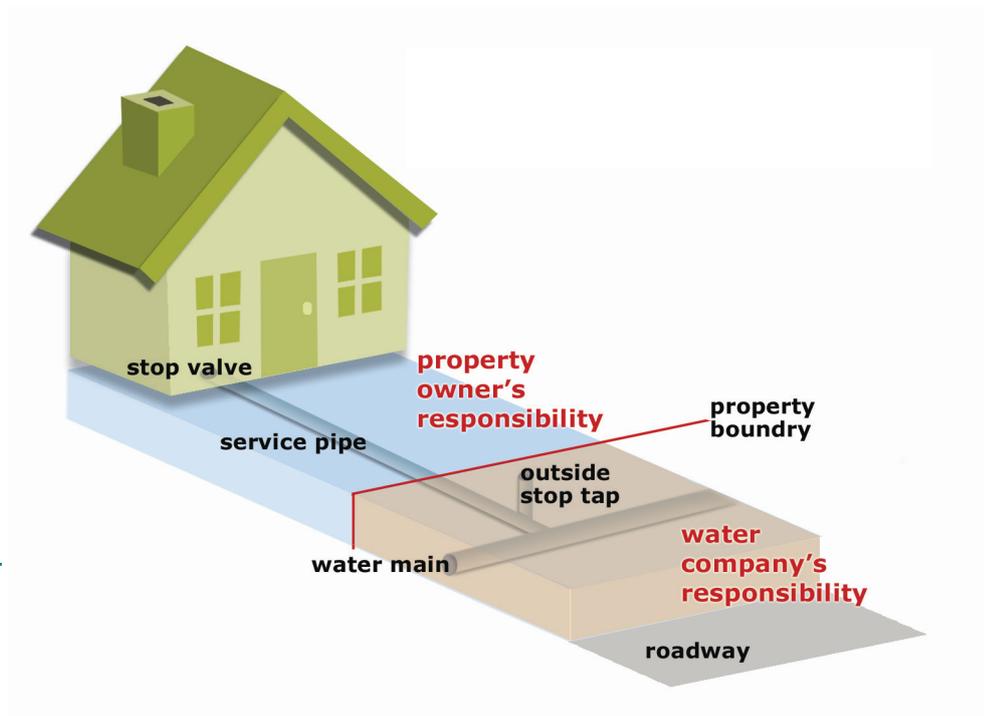


Figure 1 – Typical water supply arrangements

## Approved products

Whenever you make changes to your plumbing or connect appliances to the water supply (e.g. washing machines or dishwashers) in the home, you should only use those which comply with The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Byelaws (Scotland).

Any work on plumbing systems using unsuitable or incorrectly installed products can affect the quality of your drinking water or result in leaks that could damage your home.

### Top tips

- One easy way to check whether a product is suitable is to look for the WRAS Approved logo on packaging. WRAS Product Approval or equivalent approval schemes ensure that each product has been tested in accordance with the appropriate standards. In this document such products are referred to as "approved".
- To make sure that approved products are installed properly, always use a WaterSafe<sup>1</sup> plumber.

<sup>1</sup> [www.watersafe.org.uk](http://www.watersafe.org.uk)



Figure 2 – WRAS logo

## Contacting your water company

On occasion you may need to contact your local water company. You should be able to find who this is by reference to a recent bill or statement, in the phone book under Water, or the internet. Section 10 provides useful links.

## HYGIENE AND QUALITY

### Tap hygiene

It is important that you regularly clean taps that are, or may be, used for drinking water. Bacteria and other microorganisms occur naturally and are found within our homes.

Under certain conditions these can grow both on the outside of the tap and inside the lip of the spout. They are not visible to the naked eye, but the tap can become contaminated from food or items washed in the sink or basin.



## Top tips

- Regularly clean your household taps, including any attached fixtures or fittings, thoroughly using a dilute bleach solution ensuring that you wash inside the spout. Make sure you follow manufacturers cleaning instructions to ensure you don't damage the tap.
- After cleaning the tap, run the water for a few moments to remove any remaining disinfectant.
- To prevent possible contamination do not leave items such as flannels and dishcloths on the tap to dry and never allow food or animals to come into contact with taps.

## Taste or smells

Customers occasionally report that their tap water has an unusual taste or smell. There could be several causes of this and the most common are described below. If you get a sudden or unusual taste or smell to your drinking water please contact your water company so that they can investigate the problem.

### a) Chlorine taste

A chlorine-like smell or taste is often described as being similar to a swimming pool or bleach.

Chlorine is added continuously during water treatment as a disinfectant to kill bacteria and other microorganisms. A small amount of chlorine remains in your tap water. This is to ensure that the quality of the drinking water is maintained through the pipe network.

Some people are more sensitive than others to the smell or taste of chlorine and may become aware of occasional changes in chlorine levels in their tap water. This could be because the water company has been working on the water mains network or is having to supply you with water from a different water treatment works.



## Top tip

- If you find the taste of chlorine unpleasant, a good solution is to put a jug of tap water in the fridge. This will naturally reduce any chlorine smell or taste. Cover the jug and use within 24 hours to prevent microorganism growth.

### b) Antiseptic / TCP taste

An antiseptic / TCP taste or smell is sometimes described as chemical or medicinal.

These tastes are often associated with rubber or plastic materials used throughout the home, such as tap washers, washing machine and dishwasher hoses or other flexible hoses.

Connections for dishwashers and washing machines should be made using approved products and should also include an approved single check valve. This will prevent water within the flexible hoses, or the dishwasher or washing machine itself, returning to your drinking water tap or back to the mains supply.

Flexible hoses can deteriorate over time and release traces of chemicals that can cause tastes and smells that are particularly noticeable with hot drinks. See comments on kettles in section b) below.

If you experience these tastes or smells in your tap water it may be that your equipment has been installed incorrectly or are deteriorating.

## Top tips

- One way of checking if the taste is caused by washing machine or dishwasher hoses is to turn off the valves which control the flow of cold water into the machine overnight, if they are easy to reach. Then, run the tap which you use for drinking water for a short period and taste the water. If this solves the taste problem, exchange the hose(s) for new approved replacements or fit an approved single check valve on the end of the machine hose where it connects to the household pipe work. Remember to open the valve again before using your washing machine or dishwasher.
- If it does not solve your problem then contact your local water company for advice.



Figure 3 – washing machine cold water valves with check valve

### c) Unusual tastes in hot drinks

If you notice unusual medicinal or plastic tastes only in hot drinks this can often be due to the seal within the kettle. This is particularly noticeable in new kettles. Tastes can also be caused by repeatedly boiling water in the kettle.

#### Top tips

- To confirm whether the kettle is the problem, try making a hot drink with water boiled in a microwave or saucepan. If the taste has gone away then the cause is likely to be your kettle.
- Only fill kettles with the amount of water you need using the cold water tap.

### d) Earthy-musty or stale taste or smell

Untreated water may naturally contain microscopic plants (algae) or other organic matter. Drinking water treatment processes remove most of these but traces of the harmless materials can remain and give an earthy-musty smell or stale taste to your water.

These tastes or smells may also be caused by poor plumbing design allowing water to remain in your pipes for longer than necessary.

#### Top tips

- If you have been away for two weeks or more, then the quality of water in your home may deteriorate. This can lead to a stale taste or smell and in extreme cases may cause illness. It is advisable to run your drinking water taps after prolonged periods of non-use.
- If you continue to experience an earthy-musty taste or smell, contact your local water company who can help identify the cause.

### e) Petrol / diesel / solvent taste or smell

This type of taste or smell can be associated with spills of chemicals or fuels (such as heating oils, petrol or diesel) on the ground near any water pipes (see section 6.2). If you become aware of a spill, or notice a petrol-like taste or smell to your water, contact your local water company immediately.

## Appearance

Your water can, on rare occasion, appear discoloured. This can include water having a cloudy or milky appearance, being brown or orange in colour or having a blue-green colour. The following sections indicate why this may be and suggests steps you can take to address it:

### a) Cloudy (or milky) water

You may find that your drinking water has a cloudy or white appearance. The most common cause of this is tiny air bubbles. You can confirm this by running a glass of water and standing it for a few moments.

If the water clears from the bottom upwards then the cause is trapped air. Air in drinking water is completely harmless. It can be caused by internal plumbing, such as faulty taps or by water being warmed. If you have air in your hot water you may wish to contact your WaterSafe plumber or GasSafe heating engineer.



Cloudy water due to air can also be caused by a burst water main or when the water company has been carrying out maintenance work on pipes. If your water contains air for the first time, has been cloudy for more than a day or your neighbours are also affected, contact your local water company.

If the water clears from the top down then this may be caused by chalky deposits. You should contact your local water company.

## Top tips

- **Run your tap for a few minutes and fill another glass, if it runs clear then it is most likely due to warming in your internal pipework. Properly lag your cold water pipes to prevent warming.**
- **Check your stop tap is fully open.**

### **b) Brown or orange water**

Occasionally you may find that your cold water looks slightly brown or orange. Over time deposits can build up in water mains for example rusty deposits from old iron mains. These deposits can be disturbed if there is a sudden change in the direction or flow in the water main. This can happen for a number of reasons, for example, a burst on the water main, bringing a water main back into use after repairs, the water company having to move water from one area to another to cope with changes in demand or the use of water for firefighting.

Your water company will normally warn you in advance when it is carrying out planned work on the water mains and there is a risk of discoloured water and they will advise you of the actions to take.

If you have not been warned and you notice brown water you should run the tap to see if this helps the water to clear. If the water does not clear after a short time you

should contact your local water company. If you have brown deposits in your hot water you may wish to contact your WaterSafe plumber or heating engineer.

Brown water may also be caused by the deterioration of your storage tank (see Section 4) or the condition of the service pipe connecting your

house to the water main in the street. If this is the case your neighbours may not be experiencing the same issues. You may wish to contact your WaterSafe plumber who can advise you on the next steps to take.

### **Top tip**

- **Check water company websites and social media to see if there is a burst main in your area. If so wait until the burst is fixed and then flush taps.**

### **Top tips**

- **If you have discoloured water please do not do any laundry until the water is clear as this may result in staining. If staining occurs keep the items damp until the discoloured water is gone and then re-wash using a washing powder.**

### c) Blue-green water

#### Copper plumbing

Hot water storage or cylinders as well as most household pipes are often made from copper. In buildings with new plumbing small quantities of copper can dissolve into the water until a natural protective layer builds up on the inside of the pipes. Usually this does not cause a problem other than the risk of slight staining, especially with white baths and sinks.

Sometimes the water can develop a blue-green tint. This may be associated with water that has remained in contact with copper pipes for a long time or poorly installed plumbing. The blue-green water will disappear when the tap is run. This problem should only last for a few days whilst the protective layer forms.

#### Loo block

A poorly installed toilet cistern or a faulty flush mechanism can sometimes cause blue water as a result of water containing loo block siphoning back into the plumbing system. This is more likely after pipework has not been used for some time or where there has been a problem in the external network.



If you experience blue or blue-green water contact your water company immediately for advice and, if necessary, to arrange an inspection of your plumbing system.

### Top tips

- To prevent this problem always follow the manufacturer's instructions including what products to use with your toilet and use a WaterSafe plumber for any plumbing work.

## Temperature

You may experience warm water when you initially turn on the cold tap. Keeping your drinking water cold is important as it reduces the risk of harmful bacteria or other microorganisms growing in your plumbing.

In periods of hot weather the water will naturally be warmer. However the warming of your water may also happen if your cold water pipe runs very close to a hot water or

central heating pipe in your home. Mixer taps can also cause this problem. As a result you may need to run the cold tap for some time until the temperature drops.

### Top tip

- **Installing insulation or lagging around and between pipes may overcome this problem. Contact your WaterSafe plumber.**

## TREATING WATER IN THE HOME

The quality of tap water in the UK is very high and is routinely monitored by your local water company to ensure it meets drinking water quality standards. As a result there is no need to further treat your water. However some people choose to use filters to remove traces of chlorine or softeners to remove or reduce hardness. The following sections provide advice on how to using these safely:

### Water filters

Water filters can either be connected to the domestic plumbing (plumbed in) or separate such as jug filters. Some filters also reduce hardness in the water that can cause scale build up in kettles. With all types of filter, you should follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation, maintenance and use.

Jug filters are designed to be small and portable and filter the water into a glass or plastic container. The water they produce should be treated like any food and used as soon as possible. Water in jug filters is best stored in a refrigerator and consumed within 24 hours after which it should be replaced as there will be insufficient chlorine to prevent growth of bacteria or other microorganisms.

Care should be taken with filter cartridges to ensure that they do not become damaged or split. If this occurs, tiny beads or small black particles may appear in the filtered water. If this happens the filter cartridge should be changed immediately.

Plumbed in filters are permanently installed in the cold water supply and are connected to either the existing taps or a dedicated tap. The installation of a plumbed-in filter must comply with The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and Byelaws. Filters only last for a limited time and should be regularly changed as recommended in the manufacturer's instructions.

## Water softeners

Water hardness comes from naturally occurring calcium and magnesium salts, and the harder the water, the more of these salts it will contain. Some people living in hard water areas choose to artificially soften their water to boilers, kettles and other water heating appliances to prevent the build-up of scale deposits. Softening will also reduce the amount of detergent required for washing clothes.

The natural salts which cause hard water also give the water a crisp, pleasant and fresh taste, which is lost when water is softened. Most softeners replace the calcium and magnesium that causes hardness with sodium.

It is particularly important that artificially softened water is not used for powdered milk for babies' feed. This is because powdered milk already contains sufficient sodium, and very young babies have a limited tolerance to sodium. Anyone on a sodium-restricted diet should follow their doctor's instructions. In addition, calcium and magnesium are essential minerals in our diet.

The water supply to any plumbed-in softener in domestic premises must be via a single check valve to prevent backflow into the mains supply.

Further information can be obtained from the Information and Guidance Note "Installation of Ion Exchange Water Softeners" on the Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS) website.

### Top tips

- **If you have a water softener installed, it is recommended that you have a separate unsoftened mains fed tap for drinking water.**
- **Some softeners require you to notify your local water company and seek permission before installing. If in doubt contact your water company.**

### How can I find out how hard my water is?

Check with your local water company's website if you want to know the hardness of your tap water.

## DRINKING WATER STORAGE (TANKS OR CISTERNS)

### Do I have a water storage tank?

Most homes have cold water taps supplied directly from the mains supply which is preferable. In older houses the kitchen cold water tap maybe the only tap connected directly to the mains. This section provides advice to help you if you have a cold water tank.

If your home has a cold water storage tanks it is normally located within your roof space.

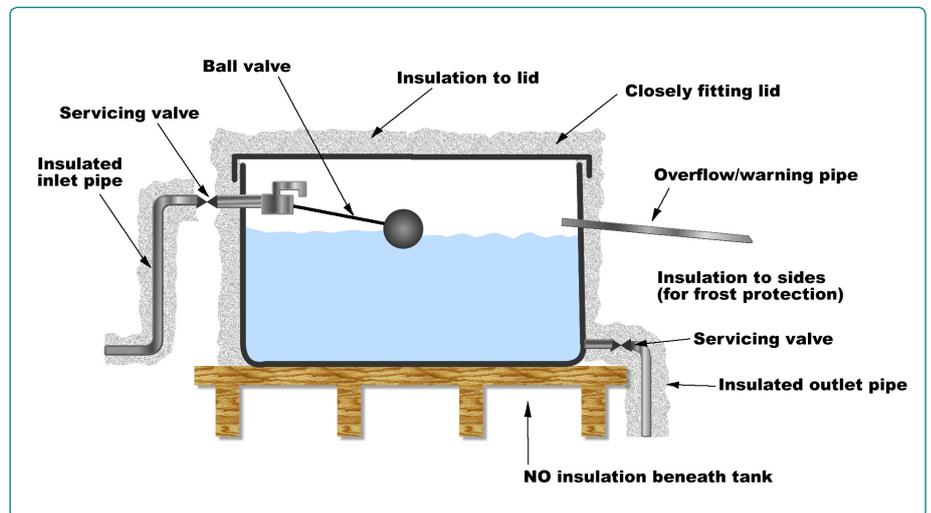
### Top tip

- If you are not sure whether a tap is connected to the mains supply a quick check is to place your thumb over the tap outlet. If you are able to hold back all the water with your thumb when the tap is fully open then the tap is likely to be connected to a tank not the mains. If in doubt ask a WaterSafe plumber to check out the plumbing arrangements for you.



**Figure 4 Typical cold water storage tank**

The design, size or condition of the tank can have significant impacts on your water quality so you should check the following.



## Is your tank in good condition?

Traditionally tanks were made of galvanised iron and these will rust over time resulting in rust particles and iron dissolving into the water. This can lead to ‘bits’ in your drinking water or the water having a brown or yellowish tinge. It can also give the water a metallic taste. Modern tanks are constructed of plastic and are unlikely to cause problems provided that they are approved for drinking water use and are properly installed and maintained.

## Does your tank have a close fitting lid?

Ensure your tank has a close-fitting lid of a suitable material that will not deteriorate or allow microorganisms to grow on it and drip into the water. The lid prevents debris falling in and polluting the water supply. It is not uncommon for birds, rodents or insects to find their way into tanks that are uncovered or only partially covered. This can cause anything from particles in the water, to unusual tastes and smells and could even make you ill. Any vents or other openings should also be screened with fine mesh for the same reason.



## Is your tank insulated?

Your tank should also be insulated along with the pipes in the roof space to avoid freezing and bursting in the winter and warming of the stored water during summer, when the roof space can get very hot.

## Does your tank have an overflow?

The tank should have an overflow pipe to warn you about a potential flood and divert any excess water safely and conspicuously out of the property otherwise it could flood your home.

If you notice water coming out of the overflow it means your tank is filling too much. This probably means the ball valve in the tank needs repairing or replacing and you should contact a WaterSafe plumber straight away.

## Is your tank adequately supported?

Modern approved tanks should be able to contain water without collapsing or splitting, provided they are adequately supported.

It is not appropriate to stand a plastic tank directly on the joists of the ceiling because the weight will not be uniformly distributed. Check that it is standing on a platform, which is of suitable thickness and constructed from a material that can support its weight when filled with water to the rim of the tank. The platform should extend a minimum of 150mm in all directions beyond the edge of the maximum dimensions of the tank so that no part of it overhangs the support. Check also that the support is not rotten or distorted due to leakage or condensation. National standards exist to ensure that tanks are designed and installed correctly. For example British Standard (BS 4213:2004) states that the minimum support for plastic storage tanks, of a capacity up to 500 litres should be at least 15mm thick marine plywood to provide a durable, rigid, flat and level platform beneath the whole of its base.

### Top tip

- If you are concerned about whether your storage tank is suitably supported you should contact a WaterSafe plumber.

# STAINING OF FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

## Pink/red stains

The reddish-pink colour sometimes seen on shower curtains, bath sealant, or around taps is not caused by the water itself, but by the growth of common bacteria or other microorganisms. These can thrive in moist, warm environments like those found in bathrooms. Their presence does not indicate a problem with the quality of the mains water supply.

The solution to the problem is to wipe down wet surfaces and increase air circulation by opening a window or fitting an extractor fan to ensure that affected areas are quickly dried out after use.

## Mould

Black or grey staining around taps in the kitchen, bathroom or showers, on the grout between tiles and in washing machine powder drawers is quite common. This can also appear as a thin black film or jelly like substance from your tap. It can be caused by the presence of airborne mould that can grow in damp areas. The problem is made worse if the area is poorly ventilated, or if aerosol deodorants or other sprays (which provide a food source for the mould) are used.

### Top tips

- **Regular use of a dilute bleach solution will help minimise problems. Make sure you follow manufacturers cleaning instructions to ensure you don't cause any damage.**
- **Remove any residues left by cleaning products, soap, shampoo, hairspray or deodorants as they can provide a source of food which encourages growth of bacteria or other microorganisms.**
- **Make sure affected areas are well ventilated.**
- **Repair dripping taps to avoid staining on baths and basins.**

## OUTSIDE YOUR HOME

### Outside taps and hosepipes

A hosepipe connected to an outside tap can present a serious risk to water quality in the home unless it is protected against backflow to prevent water returning to your drinking water tap or to the mains supply. In most cases this is easily achieved by fitting an approved double check valve which should prevent any contaminants being drawn back into the pipe work.

#### Top tips

- Turn off the hosepipe at the tap and ideally fully disconnect when not in use.
- Hosepipes should be fitted with a self-closing flow control (such as a trigger spray gun) to prevent use when unattended.
- Hosepipe outlets should never be placed into drains, garden ponds, buckets or watering-cans so that they become submerged in water as this may result in water being siphoned back into your drinking water supply.
- Ensure any outdoor taps or pipework are properly insulated in winter.



### Chemical spills on your driveway or garden

You should take care not to spill any chemicals or fuel on the ground. Products such as heating oil, petrol, diesel and creosote contain chemicals that can rapidly soak through the driveway or soil and permeate plastic water pipes, causing unpleasant tastes and smells.

If you become aware of a chemical spill, for example, if a vehicle leaks a lot of oil or fuel on your driveway or you have a spillage of heating oil, remove as much as possible straight away and inform your water company. If the spillage is extensive you should also contact your local authority which may have specialised services to help you dispose of any waste material.

Once soil and plastic pipes become contaminated in this way, the only solution is to completely replace the pipe with either a metal or barrier pipe system (a plastic pipe with a layer of metal foil for added protection). This is a job for a WaterSafe plumber or a member of an approved contractor scheme who specialises in underground installations, groundwork or external services.



## Water reuse systems

Your house might be connected to an individual or a communal water recycling system. Individual systems are normally fed by rainwater or by grey water reuse.

A rainwater harvesting system collects rain water from your roof, and a grey water reuse system collects water from sinks and baths. This water is then saved in a storage tank and can be used for outside taps or flushing toilets. Communal water recycling systems may use a variety of sources and do not necessarily feed a storage tank. Pipes carrying recycled water should be appropriately labelled. It is vital that these water reuse systems are kept completely separate from your drinking water supply.

Check your water reuse system from time to time to see if the water in the tank, if it is accessible, looks murky or starts to smell. If it does contact the manufacturer to get a professional to check it over and have it cleaned.

If you have any problems with your rainwater harvesting or grey water system, do not attempt to connect the mains water supply to your toilet's supply. Always use a WaterSafe plumber who understands reuse systems and tell them you have a rainwater or grey water system as they will know how to fix it.

Check your normal plumbing system to make sure the rainwater system is not directly

connected to your drinking water. Ensure any mains water back-up goes through an appropriate, properly installed backflow prevention device.

Make sure the garden tap and pipes carrying rainwater in your house have been labelled to remind your visitors or tradespeople that this is not regular drinking water. Don't remove this labelling, as it is there to keep you and your family safe and to let your plumber or other workers know the plumbing in your house has a rainwater harvesting or grey water system.

If you have a rainwater harvesting system and your drinking water tastes odd or appears cloudy or discoloured, call your water company immediately so that they can arrange an inspection of your plumbing.

## Top tips

- If you have a water meter, check and read it regularly. If you notice an increase in the amount of water that is being recorded, it could be that the mains back-up water is being used a lot more, especially if there has been no rain. This could be normal, but it's worth checking, if accessible, to make sure that the increase isn't due to a problem with the rainwater system..
- If your toilet cistern is not filling, keep your toilets working by using a bucket of water to flush them or fill the cistern so you can flush it normally.
- Have all filters (or UV disinfection units, if you have one), serviced at the times recommended.
- Keeping gutters clear of leaves, moss and debris will keep the rainwater cleaner.
- Don't use rainwater to fill your swimming pool or children's paddling pools as you can't guarantee the rainwater will not have harmful bacteria in it.

## LEAD PIPES

Lead is present in our environment and comes from a variety of sources and may be present in low concentrations in air, food, soil or water. It can build up in the body and it can be harmful, especially to young children.

Lead can be released into water from lead pipe work, brass water fittings, lead-based solder or other water fittings containing lead.

### Top tip

- **Always use a WaterSafe plumber. They will only use approved materials suitable for drinking water and never use lead solder on your drinking water plumbing.**

## Standards and testing

Water companies take samples from randomly selected customers' properties to ensure the water supplied meets high quality standards. If the legal lead standard is exceeded in a water sample taken from your property then your water company will contact you to make you aware of the result. Your water company will be able to advise you on their policy for lead pipe replacement which will include replacement of the section of pipe owned by the water company free of charge. It is recommended that customers consider replacing all pipe work in contact with drinking water including any internal lead plumbing.

## How do you know if there are lead pipes in your home?

If your home was built before 1970 it may have lead pipes. If it was built after 1970 it is unlikely to have lead pipes as their use in drinking water systems became illegal. Even in properties with no lead pipe work it may be that there are other sources of lead in drinking water such as brass fittings or improperly used lead based solders.

Each property is different. However it is worth checking behind the cupboards in your kitchen to look at the incoming pipe work. You may also need to look in other places, e.g. under the stairs. Find the pipe leading to the kitchen tap. Check along as much

of its length as possible to see if it is made of lead. Unpainted lead pipes are dull grey in colour. They are also soft. If you scrape the surface gently, you will see the shiny, silver-coloured metal beneath.



Figure 5 – Example lead pipe arrangement

If in doubt, ask a WaterSafe qualified plumber or your local water company for advice. You can also ask your water company to test the water at your kitchen tap as lead levels may be low even if there are lead pipes in your property.

## What can you do to reduce lead in your water?

If your home has lead pipes there are short term measures you can take to reduce the amount of lead in your water. Run the tap to remove water that has been standing in the pipes for long periods, for example, overnight, or if no one has run the taps for several hours. In these circumstances, draw off a washing-up bowlful of water from the kitchen tap to clear the water which has been standing in the pipes. This need not be wasted but can be used on the garden or for something other than drinking or cooking.

In the long term pipe replacement is the best solution and you should discuss this with your water company who may be able to coordinate with replacement of their section of the pipe. Your existing lead supply pipe may have been used for electrical

earthing purposes even though this has not been allowed for new installations since 1966. Therefore if you alter or replace your lead pipe-work you may need to seek advice from your electricity supply company or an approved electrical contractor.

## PREPARING FOR FREEZING WEATHER

If your home suffers a burst pipe during periods of cold weather, you could be left with no water and a hefty bill to repair the damage to your home. Safeguard your water supply by following these simple steps to protect your home and refer to your water company's website for tips and advice.

General advice can be found on-line on Water UK's website – [www.water.org.uk/news-water-uk/latest-news/preparing-winter](http://www.water.org.uk/news-water-uk/latest-news/preparing-winter)

### Top tips

- **It is a good idea to know where your internal stop tap is and to check that it works. Try closing and opening it. The stop tap can usually be found on the pipe work under the kitchen sink or in a downstairs bathroom or cloakroom, or the cellar if your property has one.**
- **If you get a leak or burst pipe inside the property you will need to turn the internal stop tap off to prevent any flooding or damage.**
- **Ensure any outdoor taps or pipework are properly insulated in winter.**

## APPROVED PLUMBER SCHEMES

To ensure that any work is done properly it is recommended that you use a professionally qualified plumber for any plumbing work. When you are looking for a plumber select a business that is a member of an Approved Contractors' Scheme, such as WaterSafe.

WaterSafe is a dedicated online search facility bringing together thousands of qualified contractors employed by plumbing businesses from seven existing Approved Contractors' Schemes across the UK. These schemes aim to raise plumbing standards by helping customers find the nearest qualified plumbing and

heating professionals. To search for a plumbing business near you visit the WaterSafe website<sup>2</sup> and enter your postcode.

Members of Approved Plumbers schemes have a recognised plumbing qualification and knowledge. They give their customers legally recognised certificates, confirming that the plumbing work they have carried out complies with The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and Byelaws. All members of the WaterSafe Contractors' Scheme carry agreed levels of Public Liability Insurance and operate a customer complaints scheme.

To ensure that members continue to provide excellent service, approved contractor schemes not only investigate any technical complaints from customers but also regularly audit members' workmanship to make certain that it meets the requirements of The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and Byelaws.



**Trust me,  
I'm WaterSafe**

Log on to [WaterSafe.org.uk](http://WaterSafe.org.uk) to find out more



The seven Approved Contractors' Schemes that form part of WaterSafe are:

- The "Water Industry Approved Plumbing Scheme" (WIAPS) administered by WRAS,
- "Aplus" administered by AWG Limited,
- "TAPS" administered by Thames Water Utilities Limited,
- "Water Mark" administered by Severn Trent Water Limited,
- Water regulation approved contractor or person schemes administered by SNIPEF Management Limited, the Association of Plumbing and Heating Contractors Limited (APHC) and the Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering (CIPHE).

To contact an Approved Plumber, look on the websites of the organisation which runs the scheme, or search the WaterSafe website.

The seven Approved Contractors' schemes also run specialist sector schemes for ground workers, underground workers or external services. These professions are qualified for external work only such as leakage detection or service pipe repairs and renewals.

<sup>2</sup> [www.watersafe.org.uk](http://www.watersafe.org.uk)

## USEFUL LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

### **Water companies**

The Water UK website provides links to each water company:  
[www.water.org.uk/about/our-members](http://www.water.org.uk/about/our-members)

### **Drinking water regulators**

Drinking Water Inspectorate (England & Wales) – [www.dwi.gov.uk/](http://www.dwi.gov.uk/)

Drinking Water Quality Regulator for Scotland – [www.dwqr.org.uk/](http://www.dwqr.org.uk/)

Drinking Water Inspectorate (Northern Ireland) – [www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/water-home/drinking\\_water.htm](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/water-home/drinking_water.htm)

### **Advice on plumbers and The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and Byelaws**

Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS) – [www.wras.co.uk](http://www.wras.co.uk)  
Practical advice videos can be found at [www.wras.co.uk/consumers/resources/videos/](http://www.wras.co.uk/consumers/resources/videos/)

### **To find approved products**

Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS) – [www.wras.co.uk/directory](http://www.wras.co.uk/directory)

### **Information on the causes of copper corrosion**

Foundation for Water Research – [www.fwr.org/copper.pdf](http://www.fwr.org/copper.pdf)

### **Advice on water filters and softeners can be found at**

British Water – [www.britishwater.co.uk](http://www.britishwater.co.uk)  
UK Water Treatment Association (UKWTA) – [www.ukwta.org](http://www.ukwta.org)

### **Finding a qualified plumber through WaterSafe**

WaterSafe – [www.watersafe.org.uk](http://www.watersafe.org.uk)

### **Finding a qualified plumber through Approved Contractors' Schemes**

The “Water Industry Approved Plumbing Scheme” (WIAPS) administered by WRAS:  
[www.wras.co.uk/consumers/approved\\_plumber\\_scheme/](http://www.wras.co.uk/consumers/approved_plumber_scheme/)

“Aplus” administered by AWG Limited:  
[www.anglianwater.co.uk/developers/plumbers/sectored-contractors.aspx](http://www.anglianwater.co.uk/developers/plumbers/sectored-contractors.aspx)

“TAPS” administered by Thames Water Utilities Limited:

[http://secure.thameswater.co.uk/dynamic/cps/rde/xchg/corp/hs.xsl/17380.htm?utm\\_source=leafletletter/approvedplumbersutm\\_medium=print/approvedplumbersutm\\_campaign=plumber](http://secure.thameswater.co.uk/dynamic/cps/rde/xchg/corp/hs.xsl/17380.htm?utm_source=leafletletter/approvedplumbersutm_medium=print/approvedplumbersutm_campaign=plumber)

“WaterMark” administered by Severn Trent Water Limited:

[www.stwater.co.uk/businesses/watermark-plumbers/](http://www.stwater.co.uk/businesses/watermark-plumbers/)

The Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers Federation (SNIPEF):

[www.snipef.org/](http://www.snipef.org/)

Association of Plumbing and Heating Contractors Limited (APHC):

[www.aphc.co.uk/](http://www.aphc.co.uk/)

The Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering (CIPHE):

[www.ciphe.org.uk/](http://www.ciphe.org.uk/)

#### Information for Landlords

Landlord and Tenant Address Portal (Landlord TAP): [www.landlordtap.com](http://www.landlordtap.com)

“Landlord TAP is an easy to use website that allows Landlords and Managing Agents, of properties in England & Wales, to provide water companies with details of those responsible for the payment of water and/or sewerage charges for their tenanted properties.”

**WWW.WATER.ORG.UK**

**WWW.WRAS.ORG.UK**

