

Home Water Treatment Devices

What to know before you buy

CITY OF SAN BERNARDINO TAP WATER EXCEEDS ALL STANDARDS!

City of San Bernardino's tap water quality consistently exceeds all state and federal standards. In fact, we conduct more than 35,000 tests each year to make sure it stays that way. As a result, SBMWD customers do not need to purchase a home water treatment device like a filter or softener to make tap water safe to drink. If you would like to learn more about SBMWD's tap water quality, please obtain a copy of our Annual Water Quality Report by visiting our Internet site at www.sbcitywater.org.

TAP WATER AND HOME WATER TREATMENT DEVICES - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SBMWD's customers routinely ask questions about tap water and whether they need a home water treatment device. Here are a few of the most frequently asked questions we receive:

Q: Is SBMWD's tap water safe even without additional home treatment?

A: Yes. SBMWD's tap water quality exceeds all health standards established by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and California Department of Health Services. Additional treatment is not needed prior to drinking SBMWD tap water.

Q: Should I be concerned about the taste and odor of my tap water?

A: Tap water taste and odor variations in SBMWD are generally the result of the chlorine residual we maintain in tap water to keep bacteria out of the water supply and also due to naturally occurring minerals. As a whole, while these sources may affect water taste and/or odor, they do not pose a health concern. However, if you have hydrogen sulfide or rotten egg odors in your tap water, that could indicate the need for water heater maintenance.

Q: Should I be concerned about hard water?

A: We receive many questions on this subject since SBMWD's water is considered to be hard. However, water hardness does not pose a health hazard. Rather, having hard water means that over time you may have mineral (calcium and magnesium) deposits on dishes, and within appliances and plumbing, which may affect their performance and/or appearance. Additionally, hard water requires more soap than soft water.

Q: Should a person with a compromised immune system (due to chemotherapy, HIV, etc.) use a home water treatment device?

A: Immune compromised individuals may require distilled or purified water. If you are an immune compromised individual, we recommend that you consult with your physician first to find out if you really require tap water purity beyond the high level that we already provide.

STILL INTERESTED IN HOME WATER TREATMENT?

SBMWD realizes that customers' tap water preferences vary greatly by individual. Therefore, although our tap water is already completely safe to drink, you may still want to purchase a home water treatment device based largely on your personal preferences.

If you are considering a home water treatment device purchase, you should educate yourself on the wide variety of choices available on the market today. By knowing what the different home water treatment devices do, you will be able to purchase the right one for you. Provided below is a brief description of the most common options available:

Filters

The majority of the filtration systems on the market today use granular activated carbon to treat water coming from a single faucet. Some filters must be filled manually, such as a pitcher, while others, such as faucet filters and under-sink systems, are actually attached directly to the plumbing. Depending on the design and filter media used in the unit, filters are able to reduce many types of substances, such as chlorine and lead.

Water Softeners

Water softeners reduce the level of hardness in water by exchanging calcium and magnesium for sodium and potassium. Water softener units are usually made to treat water for the whole house.

Reverse Osmosis Systems

Reverse osmosis systems work by using pressure to force water through a membrane that reduces minerals including sodium chloride and heavy metals such as copper, chromium and lead. In addition, some of these systems can also reduce substances such as arsenic, fluoride and nitrates. Reverse osmosis systems treat water very slowly; therefore, they usually have a pressurized storage tank to store water to meet household demand.

Ultraviolet Treatment Systems

Ultraviolet (UV) treatment systems use ultraviolet light to kill microorganisms such as bacteria and/or viruses. UV system efficiency is affected by the clarity of the incoming water supply. Also, keep in mind that SBWMD already maintains a chlorine residual in its tap water to kill bacteria and microorganisms. Nonetheless, if you have or are considering purchasing a UV system, its efficiency will not be affected by SBMWD tap water since it is neither turbid nor dirty.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO KNOW:

Undocumented Performance Claims

Broad statements such as "removes contaminants" or "provides pure water" without certified test data to support their performance claims should be a warning sign. California law prohibits such undocumented or broad claims relating to water purifiers.

Overpriced Systems

Many of the most effective brands are also the best value, while many of the most expensive brands offer the least. In most cases, price doesn't determine value, performance does.

The California Department of Health Services certification program is a good way to determine the credibility and true performance of a product. To get certification, companies must provide extensive laboratory test data for each contaminant removal claim. It also means the company's literature and packaging have been reviewed and found not to contain false, misleading or exaggerated claims.

Regardless of the device you choose, you should carefully read its product information to understand what you are buying in terms of performance. Additionally, be certain to follow the manufacturer's instructions for

installation, operation and maintenance. For example, if you improperly install or maintain a device, such as failing to periodically change a filter, you can actually cause water quality problems.

Finally, just remember that these devices are not necessary to make SBMWD's tap water safe to drink. Therefore, when purchasing a home water treatment device, you must consider if it is worth the added expense to ensure your peace of mind and/or achieve a desired tap water taste or odor.

WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

National Sanitation Foundation (www.nsfconsumer.org/water/imdex.asp)(877) 867-3435
Underwriter's Laboratories Inc. (www.ul.com/water/ephwaterstandard3.htm)(888) 547-8851
Water Quality Association (www.wqa.org)(630) 505-0160
California Department of Health Services (www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/ddwem/technical/certification/devices.html) (916) 327-1140
Environmental Protection Agency Safe Drinking Water Hotline (www.epa.gov/ebtpages/watedrinkingwater.html)
.....(800) 426-4791