

## Water Softeners and Filters

Like other appliances, water softeners and whole house filters must be maintained to work properly. If not maintained, these systems can breed bacteria, fail or otherwise degrade the quality of the water that enters your home before it reaches your drinking glass. Because of the diversity of designs and wide range of maintenance requirements, you should check your owner's manual or contact your appliance's manufacturer to be sure you are following their recommended maintenance schedule. Point of use filters such as the cartridges on the faucet, under the sink or in refrigerators also need to be maintained properly or will degrade your water quality. It is also important to understand that turning off your softener DOES NOT bypass the tank. Your system should have a bypass built in and it must be used or you risk contaminating your water with your unmaintained appliance.

## Home Flushing

Accumulation of sediments or organic material in your plumbing may contribute to clogging, odor or taste issues. These issues can be eliminated by flushing your water pipes. A good time to flush your home plumbing is when you are notified annually that we are flushing fire hydrants in the area. Flush household plumbing with cold water. (Hot water lines are flushed when you flush your hot water heater.) Flush in a sequential order by flushing the farthest to nearest bathtub supply (in terms of distance from your shut off valve) and then work through all other faucets in the house. Remove aerators from

the ends of the indoor faucets and run faucets wide-open. Removing the aerators before flushing prevents dislodged particles from accumulating on the screens. In working through the sequence, toilets should be the last item flushed since toilet tanks typically have the smallest plumbing lines in the house supplying them. Flush the toilets two or three times each while all the faucets are running. This generates a large flow of water through the pipes to help dislodge any built-up material. After three to five minutes of flushing, turn off the water faucets then tub supplies.

Clean the aerators before reinstalling. You can remove particulates with an old toothbrush. Stubborn buildup can usually be removed by soaking them in vinegar. The same process can clear shower heads clogged with white calcium deposits.



## Incompatible Materials

Over time, plumbing materials have changed. Mixing different materials — especially metals — like copper, steel or aluminum creates chemical reactions which can cause undesirable effects and even system failures. Dielectric connectors can help avoid these issues and should always be used when connecting different materials. Installing them is usually a job for a professional plumber.

## Water Problem Troubleshooting

Problem	Likely Solution(s)
<b>Bad Smell</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water heater temperature, maintenance or replacement.</li><li>• Maintain, replace or remove water softener.</li><li>• Maintain, replace or remove water filters.</li><li>• Add water to clean dry or dirty drain traps.</li></ul>
<b>Discolored Hot Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water heater temperature, maintenance or replacement.</li></ul>
<b>Discolored Hot and Cold Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Replace incompatible plumbing materials or install dielectric connectors.</li><li>• Replace failing pipes.</li><li>• Adjust water that may be too soft.</li></ul>
<b>Crusty Buildup on Fixtures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clean with vinegar or coffee maker cleaner and a brush.</li><li>• Install a water softener.</li></ul>



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# Preserving Water Quality in Your Home



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# GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR HOME'S WATER SYSTEM

**Ohio American Water** delivers safe, quality water to more than 200,000 people in the state. We continually test water samples as they leave our plants to assure they meet or surpass all Ohio Environmental Protection Agency standards.

In spite of the high quality water we distribute, occasionally we hear from customers who are experiencing problems with the water coming from their tap.

We've assembled this brochure to help you identify some of the most common issues. Following the steps outlined in this pamphlet will help your internal plumbing perform better and last longer. Most supplies needed are available at any hardware store and should cost less than a cup of coffee. The steps only take a few minutes a year and will save you money by identifying problems before they require professional help.

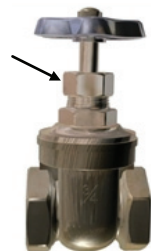
## Your Home Water System

Your home water system needs occasional attention to operate well. Neglect can lead to problems with taste, discoloration, sediment or require early replacement of fixtures, water heaters and other appliances.

**If you are uncomfortable performing these tasks, any licensed plumber can help.**

## Shutoff Valves

One of the most important things to know about the plumbing in your house is the location of the main shutoff valve. If a pipe breaks or the water heater bursts, anyone old enough to be home alone should know how to turn off the main shutoff valve fast. Unstopped leaks in your home can easily cause thousands of dollars of damage in a short time. Valves should be turned slowly to avoid causing additional leaks, and drips from the valve can usually be stopped by turning the packing nut just below the handle.



Packing nut  
below valve  
handle

Ohio American Water offers shut off valve identification tags which can be ordered at no charge from our 24-hour customer service line or website, both listed on the back of this brochure.

## Water Heater

Water heaters are the most common source of home-based water problems. They can cause discoloration, smell and sediment issues. With care, water heaters should last between seven and ten years. Please refer to the owner's manual for detailed information.

Your water heater should be flushed at least once a year to control the build-up of minerals naturally

present in water. Your water heater needs to be flushed if the hot water appears yellow or brownish in color indicating an accumulation of rust or if you find sand-like sediment in the hot water.

You may also choose to replace the plastic drain valve that come with most new water heaters. Because of the hardness of the water found in Ohio, sediment builds up faster making your heater work less efficiently. A full-flow brass valve will make future maintenance flushing easier, faster and more thorough.

## Flushing

Attach a garden hose to the drain located at the bottom of the heater. It usually looks like a regular garden faucet or a round dial with a threaded hole in the middle. Extend the garden hose to a place where the water can safely exit the heater such as a floor drain. Open the drain to allow the water to exit the heater. **CAUTION: Water may be hot and under normal household water pressure.** If the drain is made of plastic and the heater is several years old, it may be difficult to open and may break if forced. This is another good reason to consider replacing the valve.

Once the flushing water runs clear, close the drain and remove the garden hose.

## Temperature Setting

Discoloration and offensive water odors are usually the result of water temperature settings being adjusted too high especially in heaters less than

seven years old. The high temperatures can create a chemical reaction that produces a sulfur or rotten egg smell. Usually lowering the temperature below 112 degrees will help.

Smells can also result when hot water has not been in use for several days and Anaerobic bacteria begin to grow. While unpleasant, neither the bacteria nor the smell is dangerous to humans. The bacterial can be killed by flushing the water heater with a bleach or hydrogen peroxide solution but this is usually not necessary and the smell disappears with normal use.

## Anode Replacement

Water is by nature corrosive. Extremely hard or soft water is even more corrosive. To extend the life of water heaters (where corrosion is sped up because of heat) most manufacturers install a replaceable magnesium or aluminum anode rod into their tanks. The corrosive water in the tank attacks the anode rod before the other non-replaceable parts.

If sediment continues to be a problem after trying the other suggestions in this pamphlet, you may want to replace the anode rod before replacing your water heater. This is usually a job for a professional plumber.