



# City of Cortland

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## Common Questions about Discolored Water:

**Cloudy or milky water:** Occasionally your water may look cloudy or milky. Cloudy or milky-looking water is usually the result of lots of tiny air bubbles suspended in the water. The bubbles are so small that they are almost invisible, but together they look like someone poured milk in your water. Our water has dissolved air in it all of the time, but it has more during the colder months. When the colder water warms in your hot water heater or in the pipes of your home it can no longer hold all of the dissolved air, so air bubbles appear. There is nothing that the City of Cortland can do to remove these air bubbles from the water, but be assured that these bubbles will clear on their own as the water warms up. If you allow a glass of water to stand for a few moments, the air bubbles will rise to the surface. This phenomenon is called entrained air and does not affect the quality of your water and is not harmful to consume.

**Short-duration brown or yellow water from the tap:** The internal plumbing of your house may be the culprit if discolored water only appears for a minute or two after your tap is turned on. When the zinc coating on the inside of galvanized iron pipe begins to wear thin, water becomes discolored as it comes in contact with bare iron. The longer the water sits in the pipes, the worse the discoloration will be. That's why you are most likely to notice the problem first thing in the morning or when you have just returned from being out of your home for some period of time. After running your tap for a few minutes, clean water from your water heater or water main will replace the discolored water. Since iron is an essential nutrient, this condition poses no health hazard. If the discoloration bothers you, however, flush the tap until the water becomes clear.

**Constant brown or yellow water from the tap:** Sediments in water mains sometimes get stirred up when fire hydrants are used, there are emergency water breaks or when the flow of water in mains is changed. These sediments may cause your water to turn brown or yellow. Wait 30 to 40 minutes after you notice the discolored water, and try turning on the cold water in your bathtub for a minute or two. You'll probably notice that it clears right up, since sediments settle quickly back to the bottom of water mains. Discolored water due to sediments pose no known health threat, but for aesthetic reasons you should avoid doing laundry until the water color clears up.

**Brown or yellow water from hot tap only:** If the discoloration is detected only in your hot water supply, it is likely an indication of an issue with your hot water heater. It is recommended that you turn off your hot water heater and allow it to cool. Once cool, safely drain and flush your unit. Then fill and turn your unit on to determine if the problem persists. You should consult your owner's manual for instructions and warnings regarding this task or contact a licensed plumber.