



ODORS IN YOUR WATER?

WHAT TO TEST FOR:

From time to time clients approach us with water that has taste or odor problems. We are asked to recommend tests that will identify the cause of the problem so appropriate treatment can be started. Following is a list of common odor causing problems.

Water that smells like rotten eggs indicates the presence of hydrogen sulfide. Hydrogen sulfide occurs naturally in water and while it is a toxic gas the amount in water causes no health effects. However, it is extremely corrosive and will attack copper pipes. As this occurs, small black particles will occasionally appear in the water in varying degrees (some water can become black). In addition, the hydrogen sulfide can make the water almost unpalatable. This test has to be done on-site because by the time the sample arrives at the lab all the hydrogen sulfide will have dissipated. If the smell only occurs from the hot water faucet, then the anodizing rod in the water heater could be the culprit. A plumber or well company can be called to check this out. Drinking or cooking with this water is not a problem.

Water that smells or tastes like garbage could indicate the presence of iron bacteria. Iron bacteria are commonly found in waters with high concentrations of iron. The bacteria are harmless (they can't live in the human body). They do, however, give the water a foul taste or odor. If you suspect iron bacteria, lift the lid on the tank of your toilet and look on the sides of the tank where the waterline is. If you see a gray or brown scum clinging to the tank sides just under the water this is probably iron bacteria. Request a sterile bottle and take a sample and return it to the lab within 30 hours after collection. A confirmatory iron bacteria test will be run. Drinking or cooking with this water is not a problem.

Water that has a fuel smell or medicinal smell or taste may indicate the presence of fuel, solvents, or pesticides in the water. Consider possible sources of contamination and if you suspect fuel contamination request a BTEX test, for solvents a solvent screen, and for pesticides a pesticide screen. These are all fairly expensive tests, so consult with the lab for further guidance on this issue. This could be a serious health issue, so drinking or cooking with this water is not recommended.

These are the most common odor causing problems, but by no means is all inclusive. Call LGI for questions, prices and other information at 515-836-4444.

1532 DeWitt Street
Ellsworth, IA 50075
Phone: 515 836.4444
Fax: 515 836.4541
lindaman@netins.net