



UNDERSTANDING YOUR WATER QUALITY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



As stewards of a vital natural and public resource, the Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority (PWSA) is committed to providing safe and reliable drinking water to the communities we serve. Each year, we publish a **Water Quality Report**, which outlines our treatment process, the effectiveness of water quality testing, and sample results of the various contaminants found in our drinking water. You can read the most recent report on our **Water Quality & Treatment** webpage. To drive greater understanding of PWSA's water quality and treatment work, we also responded to some of the questions most frequently asked by our customers.

IS MY WATER SAFE TO DRINK? Yes, drinking water distributed to PWSA customers in Pittsburgh is safe for drinking, personal hygiene, cleaning, cooking, and other essential daily uses.

WHERE DOES MY DRINKING WATER COME FROM? Drinking water supplied by PWSA is drawn from the Allegheny River. This iconic river begins in north central Pa. and ends in Pittsburgh, joining the Monongahela River to form the Ohio River.

HOW IS MY DRINKING WATER TREATED? On average, 66 million gallons of water are treated each day. Water drawn from the Allegheny River enters our Aspinwall Water Treatment Plant and undergoes three stages of treatment over three full days prior to distribution.

- **CLARIFICATION:** This step removes suspended solids – like silt and clay – from raw water using a chemical process that clumps organic material together. This material settles out of the water by gravity.
- **FILTRATION:** Clarified water passes slowly through anthracite and sand filters to remove fine particles like microorganisms.
- **DISINFECTION:** Filtered water is sent through a large storage tank (clearwell) and treated with chlorine to inactivate harmful microorganisms. Sodium carbonate is added to adjust pH and fluoride is added to prevent cavities.

HOW FREQUENTLY IS MY WATER TESTED? Your water is tested every step of its journey by dedicated professionals responsible for operating, maintaining, and monitoring our water system. Each day, we test for approximately 100 different chemical and microbial constituents before, during, and after the treatment process. Additionally, we perform approximately 2,500 routine tests per month at the Water Treatment Plant and Microfiltration Filtration Plant. Lastly, we perform approximately 1,500 routine tests per month at various points of the distribution system.

ARE LEAD LEVELS IN COMPLIANCE? Our lead levels remain firmly in compliance with the EPA's action level of 15 ppb. Since the establishment of our industry-leading Community Lead Response program in 2016, we've replaced more than 9,136 public lead service lines and 6,048 private lead service lines. We remain dedicated to removing all lead service lines from our system through targeted programs. Our Priority Lead Service Line Replacement project will replace lead service lines at daycares and locations with elevated lead samples taken via our sampling program. To request a free lead test kit for your home visit www.pgh2o.com/leadform or contact LeadHelp@pgh2o.com.

WHAT ELSE IS PWSA DOING TO REDUCE LEAD LEVELS? In 2019, we began adding orthophosphate to our treatment process. Orthophosphate is a food-grade additive that forms a protective barrier between lead pipes and the water flowing through them. It is approved by the EPA and successfully used in water systems across the world. Orthophosphate was selected by PWSA and approved by the DEP after an extensive year-long study of treatment alternatives. We continue to monitor and refine our drinking water treatment process to further reduce lead levels.

Learn more at www.pgh2o.com/your-water/water-quality-treatment.

