

# Looking after your water system – routine flushing

## Water Safety Information Sheet



It is important to look after your water system and periodically flush your taps, especially when your system may not have been used for extended periods of time, such as over long holiday breaks.

### Why is it important to flush your water pipes?

If internal plumbing systems become empty or stagnant for long periods of time (30 days or more), the water in the pipes can become affected – in taste, colour and quality.

If small amounts of water sit in the pipes without circulating, the pipes may corrode, and fragments may enter the water. Similarly, stagnant water may also result in the build-up of harmful bacteria or biofilms (slime) in the water<sup>1</sup>.

Water pipes that have not been used can also cause odours inside a building or home and can also impact on appliances and equipment that require water to operate (like air conditioners).

### How often should we flush our system?

Flushing your system is generally a good habit to get into if your premise has been inactive for a period of time (generally 30 days or more). For larger premises (such as schools) that have been vacant during extended holiday periods, or if you've purchased a house and are unsure how long it has been vacant for, it may also be a good idea to flush your taps to be safe.

We also ask all customers who have had an interrupted water supply (where we have turned off the water to your home or business to undertake network maintenance) to flush their taps for at least two minutes when the water supply is turned back on. This will help to flush any minute iron particles and sediment which may have become dislodged in the process of restoring normal water supply.



### How to flush your system

Turn on all taps, showers, and toilets within your home (or other building – including schools or offices) for 2-3 minutes. For larger premises this should be done in sections for 2-3 minutes or longer, to allow for adequate flow pressure.

<sup>1</sup> <https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/-/media/Files/Corporate/general-documents/Infectious-diseases/PDF/Coronavirus/COVID19-Building-recommissioning-water-supply-and-water-related-services.pdf>

### Handy tips when flushing:



Remove any tap aerators, water filters and removable shower heads/hoses as these can trap sediment moved through flushing.



The first tap to be turned on should be the one that is located closest to the point where the water supply from the mains enters your home or building – then move systematically through the building to the most distant outlet.



Ensure enough water has been flushed to replace all water inside building piping with fresh/new water, on average for a family home this may take 20 minutes.

### Boiling water and chilled installed systems

For installed systems such as instantaneous hot/cold water units or taps, please follow the manufacturer's recommendations for reconnecting and flushing these systems.

### Non-drinking water

Flush water through all toilet/urinal cisterns and non-potable water outlets within the building.

### Firefighting and emergency water systems

If you have a firefighting water sprinkler and eye wash station or safety shower, these should be tested, cleaned and flushed appropriately.

### Water-based cooling systems

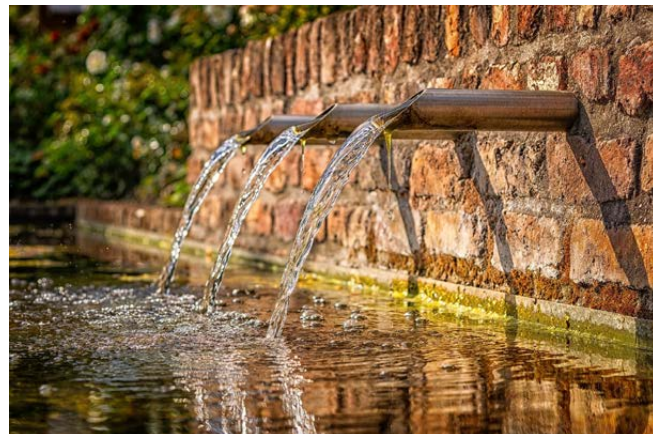
If you have a water-based air conditioner or other water-based cooling system which hasn't been operated for more than 30 days, Australian Standard AS 3666.3 requires:

- a physical check and removal of for scale, corrosion, bleed, cleanliness of wet surfaces, sludge, foam, slime, rust, and dirt;
- an assessment of the water quality management system (including water treatment), chemical analysis, conductivity/TDS, pH and other criteria associated with corrosion, scaling and fouling;
- an heterotrophic colony count test; and
- an examination of the presence of legionella bacteria.

### Decorative water features

If you have water fountains, waterfalls or ponds, these should be:

- inspected for any evidence of slime on surfaces and mosquito breeding, and
- if required, emptied, cleaned and refilled with water that is treated to prevent the growth of biofilms.



### How to save water when flushing your taps:

- collect the water being flushed for garden use or plant watering, and
- only flush for 2-3 minutes per tap (unless issues persist – then flush for up to 10 minutes or call us on 9781 0500).

### Discoloured water

Discolouration is usually temporary and flushing your system may help to clear the water.

If laundry appears dirty after washing in discoloured water, we can provide a kit to help get it clean. Keep the laundry immersed in water – if the material dries, staining may become permanent.

If water discolouration persists or if you have any issues with your water supply, please contact our customer service team on 9781 0500.

For more ways to save water around your business or home visit [busseltonwater.wa.gov.au](http://busseltonwater.wa.gov.au).