

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Does my water contain fluoride?**

Yes, OCWA water is fluoridated to a concentration of about 0.7 mg/l. OCWA is required to fluoridate by the New York State Department of Health.

### **What is the pH of my water?**

OCWA's pH is 7.1 to 8.7, slightly basic. Alkalinity varies by source ranging from 95 mg/l to 140 mg/l (CaCO<sub>3</sub>)

### **Is my water hard or soft?**

The hardness of OCWA's water ranges from 115 to 190 ppm. That is equal to about 6 to 11 grains per gallon. It is considered moderately hard. Hardness is a measurement of calcium carbonate in the water and is not a health concern.

### **Will having a water softener installed improve the water quality in my home?**

No, softening does not improve the sanitary quality of water. Softeners mostly remove calcium carbonate. They will stop 'spotting' or 'scaling' which may occur on certain surfaces, and under certain conditions, when water puddles or droplets are allowed to evaporate. Water softeners may increase water usage because it takes more soft water to rinse away soap. It is ultimately a matter of personal preference.

### **What can I do about dirty or rusty water?**

Water that is dirty or rusty can be caused by changes in flow inside the pipes. Usually, this is due to a sudden increase in flow, but sometimes, also by a change of direction. Leaks, hydrant usage, or changes in valve positioning can rile things up and cause these problems. If the problem doesn't clear up in a short period of time, if possible, call us and we will try to help. OCWA will investigate and correct the cause of the problem and flush our piping if necessary. You may then be instructed to flush the piping in your own home. The water should clear up after running it a bit.

### **What about taste or odor problems?**

Algae most commonly cause tastes and odors, which may be classified as: earthy, musty, grassy, or fishy. At the Otisco Lake and Lake Ontario plants, water is filtered through granular activated carbon. At times, powdered activated carbon can also be added to adsorb the offensive tastes and odors, and then the carbon and algae both are filtered out. Algae blooms are common in the warm and sunny months and the carbon dosage is always being monitored and adjusted. Occasionally, some tastes and odors do get through. Customer complaints about taste and odor are taken very seriously. Tastes and odors originating from algae have no adverse health effects.

### **What about chlorine taste and odor?**

Chlorine dissipates as it travels through a pipeline. In order to ensure that customers living far from the treatment plant get water that is adequately disinfected, the dosage of chlorine received by customers living close to the plant is higher. OCWA tries to accommodate everyone, but in the case of a person very sensitive to chlorine living very close to a treatment facility, this may not be possible. Chlorine can be removed simply by letting a pitcher of water stand overnight in the refrigerator or by running water through an activated carbon filter. Activated carbon filters, if used, need to be replaced regularly as old filters may promote bacterial growth.