Frequently Asked Questions

Does my water contain fluoride?

Yes, OCWA water is fluoridated to a target concentration of 0.7 mg/l.
OCWA is required to fluoridate by the Onondaga County Health Department, and we strive to stay within one tenth of 0.7 mg/l.

What is the pH of my water?

Our water's pH is 7.1 to 8.7, which is slightly basic. Alkalinity varies by source and ranges from 95 mg/l to 140 mg/l (CaCO3)

Is my water hard or soft?

The hardness of our water ranges from 115 to 190 ppm. That is equal to about 6 to 11 grains per gallon, which 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. Softening 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 also can be due to a change of direction. Leaks, hydrant usage, or changes in valve positioning can cause these problems. If the problem doesn't clear up in a short period of time, call us and we will try to help. We will investigate and attempt to correct the cause of the problem, including by flushing our piping if necessary. You may also then be instructed to flush the piping in your own home.

What about taste or odor problems?

Algae most commonly causes tastes and odors that may be classified as: earthy, musty, grassy, or fishy. At our Otisco and Ontario WTPs, water is filtered through granular activated carbon. At times, powdered activated carbon is also added to absorb the offensive tastes and odors, and then the carbon and algae are both 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 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 a treatment plant get water that is adequately disinfected, the dosage of chlorine received by customers living close to the plant is slightly higher. We try 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 reduced 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.

Why does my water look cloudy/white?

Cloudy and/or white water is generally due to excess air in the lines. Letting a cold-water tap run for 15-30 minutes will often resolve this issue. Air in the lines does not present a health or safety issue.