

# Facts on Filters



For water customers, there are a lot of questions out there:

- Should I drink bottled water or tap water?
- Should I use a filter?
- What kind of filter should I use?

Before making a decision, it is important to make sure you're informed. This brochure contains information about tap water quality and home water treatment systems. If you have additional questions, please contact us.

### Why is tap water safe to drink?



In 1974, the federal government established the Safe Drinking Water Act to protect the public from water-related illnesses. This law requires community water systems to regularly test their water supplies and meet strict federal water quality standards. Water providers conduct thousands of analyses each year to verify that the public water supply meets Safe Drinking Water Act standards.

The water in Muscatine originates from the Muscatine Island Aquifer. It is an excellent source of high-quality water. The water obtained is of such high quality that the only treatments required are small additions of chlorine, fluoride, and phosphates. Chlorine assures biological safety, fluoride assists in children's dental development, and phosphate stabilizes the minerals found in water.

MP&W is diligent about water testing. Muscatine's water surpasses all state and federal regulations all of the time. About 60 water quality tests are completed each day in our laboratories. We also use private labs to complete other required testing.

The federal government also requires that water providers produce an annual water quality report for their customers. Contact MP&W if you have not received a copy yet.

### Does my water need additional treatment?



Many stores and companies sell various home treatment devices ranging from small faucet-mounted filters to whole-house systems and water softeners. Do you need to buy one? Safe Drinking Water Act standards are set to ensure that your tap water is safe. For most people, the use of a water filter is not necessary to ensure water safety. People who have medical conditions that might put them at special risk should discuss the need for a water filter with their doctors.

There are many reasons you may choose to use a home treatment device. Some have concerns related to taste and odor, as well as hardness. Certain home treatment devices can be very effective in resolving these problems. The

important thing for consumers is to make an informed decision and not to be taken in by misleading marketing tactics.

### Home Treatment Devices

Although Muscatine's water is completely safe, some may want to purchase a home treatment device. Only buy a system to meet your specific needs or taste preferences. While we cannot recommend specific brands or products, this information should prove helpful. For specific product information, contact NSF International or the device manufacturer.

**Carafe-style filters** - Designed to work like a coffeemaker, these filters are simple to use. Just pour water in the top, and it trickles down into a pitcher that generally holds half a gallon of water.

**Faucet-mounted filters** - These small filters screw directly onto the faucet nozzle. Most units feature a bypass valve so you only filter water used for drinking.

**Under-sink filters** - These work like the faucet-mounted models, except they process far more water. Since most lack a bypass, you filter a lot of water not used for drinking.

Aside from taste issues, many customers purchase home treatment devices to address issues related to "hard" water, which is caused by high concentrations of dissolved minerals. While these naturally occurring minerals don't pose a health risk, many people prefer the aesthetic qualities of "soft" water.

**Reverse-osmosis filters** - These multistage systems use both traditional (usually carbon) filters and cellophane-like membrane filters to remove most organic and inorganic compounds. This is the only type of filter that will remove fluoride, calcium, and magnesium, the minerals that cause "hard" water. However, residential-scale reverse osmosis systems do not have sufficient capacity to treat the entire household water supply.

**Water softeners** - Unlike filters, water softeners are specifically designed to exchange calcium and magnesium for "softer" minerals, usually sodium or potassium. While hardness minerals are removed, they are replaced by salt. People on sodium-restricted diets should use caution when consuming water softened with sodium.

**Water conditioners** - These devices are marketed as a "salt-free" alternative to water softeners, purportedly producing the same benefits as softeners without actually removing the calcium and magnesium. However, the scientific community continues to debate the effectiveness of these systems.

*Remember that maintenance is important with any home treatment device, as an inadequately maintained filter can actually reduce water quality. Installation and maintenance costs can vary and should be a factor when deciding on a system.*

### Look for the NSF Label

Many water filters feature a certification by NSF International, a not-for-profit, independent organization that tests home treatment devices. While not a guarantee, the NSF label is a good indicator

the product can live up to its advertising claims. As a consumer, you may want to exercise caution if the product isn't NSF-certified.

[For More Information](#)

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