

WATER QUALITY

Frequently Asked Questions

What are Austin's main drinking water sources?

Customers of Austin Water receive their drinking water from three water treatment plants that pump surface water from the Colorado River as it flows into Lake Travis and Lake Austin. Austin Water treats and filters the water according to federal and state standards to remove any possible harmful contaminants.

The sources of drinking water nationwide (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it can be polluted by animals or human activity. Urban runoff or storm water runoff is the main cause of pollution in Austin's drinking water sources.

Is Austin's drinking water safe to drink from the tap?

Austin Water treats the drinking water to the highest standards providing exceptional reliability, and is safe to drink from the tap. Drinking water (including bottled water) may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800-426-4791.

Please Note: Some individuals may be more vulnerable than the general population to certain microbial contaminants such as *Cryptosporidium*, in drinking water. Infants, some elderly or immuno-compromised persons such as those undergoing chemotherapy for cancer; those who have undergone organ transplants; those who are undergoing treatment with steroids; and people with HIV/ AIDS or other immune system disorders can be particularly at risk from infections. You should seek advice about drinking water from your physician or health care provider. Additional guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by *Cryptosporidium* are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800-426-4791).

What contaminants may be present in Austin's source water?

Contaminants that may be present in the source water include:

- Microbial contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria;
- Inorganic contaminants, such as salts and metals;
- Pesticides and herbicides, which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, storm water runoff, and residential uses;
- Organic chemicals, from industrial or petroleum use;
- Radioactive materials, which can be naturally-occurring.

EPA prescribes regulations which limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems to ensure that tap water is safe to drink. The Food and Drug Administration regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water, which must provide the same protection for public health. Contaminants may be found in drinking water that may cause taste, color, or odor problems. These types of problems are not necessarily causes for health concerns. For more concerns with taste, odor, or color of drinking water, contact Austin Water at 512-972-0012.

Why does drinking water look cloudy when first taken from a faucet?

The cloudy water is caused by tiny air bubbles in the water similar to the gas bubbles in carbonated soft drinks. After a while, the bubbles rise to the top and are gone. This type of cloudiness occurs more often in the winter, when the drinking water is cold.

Does Austin have hard water?

Hard water is defined by the amount of calcium and magnesium present in the water. Hard water has a relatively high level as compared to soft water which has a low level. Austin tap water is considered moderately hard.

Is fluoride added to Austin's water?

Fluoride, which is a substance added to reduce cavities, is added to our water. Learn more about Austin Water's [fluoride treatment](#).

Is chlorine a safe disinfectant for drinking water?

Austin Water uses chloramine to disinfect our drinking water. Chloramine is the most effective way to ensure that water stays disinfected as it travels through our water pipeline and prevents water-borne epidemics such as cholera, typhoid, and hepatitis.