

OTTAWA PRO PLUMBING



Water Quality

Water filtration, softeners, pressure issues, and
water treatment

3 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawaplumbingpro.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

Why does my water taste metallic all of a sudden?

Metallic-tasting water usually indicates dissolved metals in your water supply, most commonly from aging pipes, water heater issues, or changes in your municipal water treatment. This can happen suddenly when pipe corrosion accelerates or your water's pH changes.

The most likely culprits in Ottawa homes are **copper or galvanized steel pipes** that have started corroding more rapidly. When water sits in these pipes for extended periods (like overnight), it can dissolve small amounts of metal. You'll often notice the metallic taste is strongest with the first water you draw in the morning. **Iron from old galvanized pipes** is another common source, sometimes accompanied by rusty-colored water.

Your **water heater** could also be the source, especially if the anode rod is failing or if sediment has built up in the tank. The metallic taste might be more noticeable with hot water if this is the case. In some instances, changes in the **City of Ottawa's water treatment process** can alter the water's pH, making it more corrosive to your home's plumbing.

Start by determining if the taste affects both hot and cold water and whether it's present at all taps or just specific ones. Run cold water for 30 seconds before drinking to flush out water that's been sitting in pipes. If the problem persists, you should have your water tested and your plumbing system inspected, as prolonged exposure to certain metals can be a health concern.

Contact a licensed plumber to assess your pipes and water heater - they can determine if pipe replacement or water heater service is needed. The City of Ottawa also provides water quality reports if you suspect a municipal supply issue.

Q2

Do I need a water softener in Ottawa?

Most Ottawa homes don't need a water softener - the city's water is naturally soft to moderately soft, with hardness levels typically ranging from 80-120 mg/L (4.7-7.0 grains per gallon). This is well below the threshold where water softening becomes necessary for most households.

Ottawa's municipal water comes primarily from the Ottawa River and undergoes extensive treatment at the Britannia and Lemieux Island water treatment plants. The natural geology of the Ottawa River watershed means the water doesn't pick up high levels of calcium and magnesium minerals that create "hard water" problems. You're

unlikely to experience the typical hard water issues like soap scum buildup, reduced lather, or mineral deposits on fixtures that plague homeowners in areas with naturally hard groundwater.

However, some Ottawa residents still choose water softeners for specific reasons. If you have particularly sensitive skin or hair that reacts to even moderate mineral content, a softener might provide benefits. Some people also prefer the "slippery" feel of softened water for bathing. Additionally, if you're on a private well rather than city water, your situation could be completely different - well water hardness varies dramatically depending on your specific location and the geological formations your well draws from.

Before investing in a water softener system (which typically costs \$1,500-\$3,500 installed in Ottawa), consider having your water tested to determine your actual hardness levels. You can request a free water quality report from the City of Ottawa or have a private lab test your specific tap water. Many Ottawa residents find that a simple carbon filter system addresses their primary water quality concerns at a fraction of the cost.

If you're experiencing what seems like hard water problems, it's worth having a plumber inspect your fixtures and water heater - sometimes issues attributed to water hardness are actually caused by aging plumbing components or other water quality factors that a softener won't address.

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Q3

Why does my water smell like chlorine?

Chlorine smell in your water is typically from municipal water treatment and is generally safe to drink, though the odor can be unpleasant and may indicate higher-than-normal chlorine levels.

Municipal water systems in Ottawa use chlorine or chloramine as disinfectants to kill harmful bacteria and viruses during water treatment. The City of Ottawa maintains chlorine residual levels between 0.04-4.0 mg/L as required by

Ontario's Safe Drinking Water Act. You might notice the smell more during certain times of year when the city increases chlorination due to seasonal water quality changes, after water main repairs, or if you live closer to a water treatment plant.

Strong chlorine odors can sometimes indicate that chlorine levels are on the higher end of the acceptable range. This often happens during spring runoff when source water requires more treatment, or during hot summer months when bacterial growth potential increases. The smell is usually most noticeable when you first turn on taps after they haven't been used for several hours, as chlorinated water sits in your home's pipes.

If you're on a private well, chlorine smell could indicate someone has recently shocked the well system with bleach for disinfection, or there may be an issue with your water treatment equipment if you have a chlorination system installed.

Simple solutions include running cold water taps for 30-60 seconds to flush out water that's been sitting in pipes, or letting water sit in an open container for a few hours to allow chlorine to dissipate naturally. Installing a whole-home carbon filtration system or point-of-use filters can effectively remove chlorine taste and odor if it's bothersome.

If the chlorine smell is extremely strong, persists after running water, or is accompanied by other water quality issues, contact the City of Ottawa's water quality hotline at 3-1-1 to report it. For persistent issues or if you're considering water treatment solutions, a licensed plumber can assess your specific situation and recommend appropriate filtration systems.

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