South East Water

healthy water for life

Galvanised wrought iron pipes and water quality

Do I have galvanised wrought iron pipes?

Galvanised wrought iron (GWI) pipes have not been installed for carrying drinking water in residences since the mid 1970s. Many older residences still have GWI pipes. These pipes are a shiny grey colour (scratching the surface can help you determine the colour). If the pipes are an orange/brown colour the pipe is probably copper.

What are the signs of potential corrosion?

- Yellow/brown/red water coming from the cold water tap.
- An unpleasant taste to the water, particularly noticeable in tea and coffee.
- A reduction in waste pressure/flow because the pipes are becoming blocked with rust flakes and particles.
- Stains on washing or plumbing appliances.
- Blocked filters.
- Repeated flushing of taps to get clear water.

Is it dangerous?

Discoloured water from corroded GWI pipes doesn't pose a health risk.

What causes it?

Melbourne has 'soft' water (low levels of calcium and magnesium salts) which reacts aggressively to GWI pipes.

What can I do about GWI pipe corrosion?

Short-term

- Turn the tap on full for one to two minutes. This will reduce discolouration but you may need to keep doing this as it is only a temporary solution.
- Install a filter on your taps.

Long-term

Replace old pipes with new ones made from an alternative material.

How do I test my water quality?

You will need: A white ice-cream container or bucket.

When: First thing in the morning (before water is used in the house).

Step 1

Fill the bucket with two to three litres of water from a tap.

Step 2

If GWI corrosion is present the water will usually be a yellow/brown colour. Run the tap (on full) for about two minutes.

Step 3

Refill the bucket. If the water is clear, the GWI pipes are probably the cause of the discoloured water.

If the water remains discoloured, there may be a problem with the water supply system. Contact us on **132 812** for more information.