

UNDERSTANDING YOUR WATER QUALITY RESULTS

Where the water quality standards come from

The water we supply for domestic use or food production must comply with the standards in The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017, which incorporate European Union standards and more stringent UK national standards. These Regulations detail the acceptable levels of certain characteristics, elements and substances allowed in drinking water. Usually, this is a maximum level; but, occasionally, a minimum is also set (e.g. pH). This permissible level is known as the Prescribed Concentration or Value (PCV). Some of the regulatory levels are set for aesthetic reasons and not for health (e.g. Colour).

Where we sample

Samples are taken from our water treatment works, service reservoirs, and taps in customers' homes. Every year, our accredited laboratories carry out nearly 200,000 sophisticated tests to ensure quality standards are met. The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) within the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) also independently audits these tests and issues a report each year on its findings. DWI ensures that NI Water meets more than 50 legal standards for drinking water quality to match water companies across the rest of the UK. The standards are strict and generally include wide safety margins. They cover: bacteria; chemicals, such as nitrates and pesticides; metals, such as lead; and how water looks and tastes.

What happens if a test fails?

Sample tests can fail, from time to time, for various reasons. Sometimes, the water in our mains or pipes and in the neighbouring properties is good, but the failure is caused by the householder's own plumbing system. However, we take all failures of these standards very seriously and these are dealt with by a team of specialists. All failures are recorded, investigated and action is taken to resolve the problem. If the test failure is found to be due to the tap or internal plumbing, NI Water will inform the customer in writing of the reason for the failure so that they can take appropriate action.

A copy of the letter is also provided to the Public Health Agency, the local Environmental Health Officer and the DWI.

All PCV failures are also reported externally to the DWI, respective health boards, Environmental Health departments, the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (CCNI), Department for Infrastructure Water Policy Unit and the Utility Regulator.

Units of measurement

The units of measurement used in this factsheet are as follows:

- 1 milligram per litre (mg/l) is one part per million (ppm)
- 1 microgram per litre ($\mu\text{g/l}$) is 1 part per billion (or thousandmillion)
- NTU – Nephelometric turbidity units (for turbidity measurement)
- Pt/Co – Platinum-Cobalt units Standard (for colour measurement)
- $\mu\text{S/cm}$ – micro siemens per centimetre (for conductivity measurement)

Concentration or value

Shown in three ways:

- **Min**(imum), the lowest result during the period
- **Mean**, the average of the results
- **Max**(imum), the highest result during the period.
- A '<' symbol means a result was less than the value at which a parameter can be detected.
- A '>' symbol means a result was greater than the range within which a parameter is normally detected.

Number of samples

- Total taken – the number of samples tested for each parameter
- Contravening – shows the number of samples that exceeded the PCV
- % of samples contravening PCV – the number of samples that contravened the PCV compared to the total number of samples taken expressed as a percentage.

INDIVIDUAL PARAMETERS/SUBSTANCES

Hardness (Dishwasher Settings)

Total Hardness is normally caused by dissolved calcium and, to a lesser extent, magnesium in rocks through which the water has passed. In Northern Ireland, our water is predominantly soft to moderately soft or slightly too moderately hard. Hardness means you may have to use more soap when washing as hard water lathers less than soft water. It has not been proven to have adverse effects on health and is safe to drink. There is no standard specified in the current regulations.

Dependent upon the origin and manufacturer of your dishwasher, you may require a specific parameter, such as Clarke degrees (a.k.a. English degrees) or French or German degrees.

GH is general hardness, while KH is Carbonate, or temporary hardness.

pH (listed under 'Hydrogen Ion')

This is a scientific term used to describe the acidity or alkalinity of a fluid. We need to control the pH of water because:

- if water is too acidic, it may corrode metal pipes in the distribution system
- if water is too alkaline, it may cause deposits to form in the pipes

The standard is to keep water pH levels in the 6.5-9.5 range.

Colour

The colour of drinking water is usually dependent on the presence of naturally-occurring dissolved organic matter. For example, the higher the peat content of a catchment, (e.g. the Mourne Catchment), the higher the level of colour in the raw water. However, colour may also be due to the presence of iron contributed by old cast-iron mains.

- PCV for colour is 20 mg/lPt/Co.

Sometimes, the water coming out of the tap has a milky or cloudy appearance, which is usually caused by excess air dissolved in the water as micro bubbles. This is not harmful and, if the water is left to stand for a few minutes, it will clear from the bottom upwards (i.e. the bubbles of air rise to the top of the glass and escape).

Turbidity

Turbidity is caused by very fine insoluble materials that may be present in water. Levels are closely monitored during the treatment processes.

- PCV at the customer's tap is 4 NTU

Odour and taste

Customer complaints quite often relate to taste and odour. Quality control tests are carried out to measure the level of taste and odour and are performed by a specialist testing panel.

- PCV for each = Dilution Number >0

Conductivity

Conductivity is proportional to the dissolved solids content of the water and is often used as an indication of the presence of dissolved minerals, such as calcium, magnesium and sodium.

- PCV is 2500 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ at 20°C

Chlorine (Cl - listed under Free-Residual disinfectant)

Chlorine is added to water to ensure water is free from bacteria. When chlorine is added, not all of it is used up in the process. Some remains as 'free chlorine' to make sure the water remains safe as it passes through the distribution system. No PCV is prescribed for chlorine in the regulations and these levels are set to ensure that a small concentration remains at the end of the distribution system to maintain customer safety.

E. Coli and enterococci

If present, these indicate a possible breach in the integrity of the water supply system. An effective treatment process will kill any organisms present.

PCV standards are:

- 0 /100ml for E. Coli
- 0 /100ml for Enterococci

Coliform Bacteria

These are naturally present in the environment. Their presence may indicate a possible breach in the integrity of the supply system or contamination from the kitchen sink or taps.

Nitrite and Nitrate (NO₂ and NO₃)

Normally only trace amounts of these compounds are found in water.

- PCV for nitrite = 0.5 mgNO₂/l
- PCV for nitrate = 50 mg NO₃/l

Chloride (Cl)

Chloride in water originates from natural sources such as mineral deposits. It can contribute to taste which may be unacceptable to customers if the standard is exceeded.

- PCV = 250 mg Cl/l

Fluoride (F)

NI Water does not add fluoride to any water supply in Northern Ireland. Fluoride can occur naturally in some raw water supplies at low levels.

- PCV = 1.5 mg F/l

Sulphate (SO₄)

Sulphate occurs naturally in water and originates from mineral deposits. High concentrations may give rise to taste problems and, in the long-term, damage pipe work.

- PCV = 250 mg SO₄/l

Copper (Cu)

Copper can occur naturally in some water sources and is normally found in low concentrations in drinking water. Any significant amount of copper is likely to come from corrosion of customers' pipes or fittings.

- PCV = 2 mg Cu/l

Iron (Fe)

This is one of the most abundant metals found naturally in surface and ground waters. After treatment, it is normally reduced to trace concentrations in drinking water. Increased levels can occur due to the corrosion of old cast-iron water mains. There is no known health risk associated with high iron concentrations, but staining of clothing in washing machines can occur. The standard has been set for aesthetic reasons as levels persistently above the standard can give rise to discoloured water.

- PCV = 200 µg Fe/l

Manganese (Mn)

Manganese occurs naturally in water. The standard is set for aesthetic reasons as black deposits of manganese dioxide can give rise to discoloured water. High concentrations of manganese in tap water may cause discolouration and possible staining of clothing in washing machines.

- PCV = 50 µg Mn/l

Aluminium (Al)

Aluminium can occur naturally in water within certain catchments. However, aluminium compounds are used in the treatment process to help remove impurities. Any aluminium compounds added during the treatment process are removed before the final treated water leaves the treatment works.

- PCV = 200 µg Al/l

Sodium (Na)

Sodium occurs naturally in trace amounts in water. High concentrations may impart a level of taste that is unacceptable to customers.

- PCV = 200 mg Na/l

Lead (Pb)

Lead is not normally present in water sources, but significant concentrations may be present at customers' taps if lead or copper pipes with lead joints have been used in the plumbing system. More information is available [here](#).

- PCV = 10 µg Pb/l

Trihalomethanes (THMs)

THMs occur in drinking water as by-products of the reaction of chlorine with naturally- occurring dissolved organic materials. In drinking water, only four compounds out of the group of THMs have health significance, the most common of which is chloroform. The PCV is based on the sum of the concentrations of all four constituents.

- PCV = 100 µg/l

Other substances

In addition to those listed and explained above, we also test for substances such as hydrocarbons, pesticides and herbicides, phenols and organic carbon – see below.

<u>Parameters</u>	<u>PCV</u>	<u>What it means</u>
Ammonium	0.5 mg NH ₄ /l	May be naturally present in some waters and is not harmful.
Antimony	5 µg Sb/l	Very low levels of these substances may occur naturally in source waters, but higher amounts could be associated with industrial pollution.
Arsenic	10 µg As/l	
Cadmium	5 µg Cd/l	
Cyanide	50 µg CN/l	
Chromium	50 µg Cr/l	
Mercury	1 µg Hg/l	
Selenium	10 µg Se/l	
Boron	1 mg B/l	
Nickel	20 µg Ni/l	
Benzene	1 µg/l	Benzene may be introduced into source water by industrial effluents or atmospheric pollution.
Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons - PAH - Sum of four substances	0.1 µg/l	PAHs may be introduced into source water by industrial effluents or atmospheric pollution.
Benzo(a)pyrene	0.01 µg/l	Benzo(a)pyrene is a polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) that occurs ubiquitously in the environment, as a consequence of incomplete combustion. Elevated levels can occasionally be detected in

<u>Parameters</u>	<u>PCV</u>	<u>What it means</u>
		drinking water as a result of contact with coal tar pitch linings.
Bromate	10 µg BrO ₃ /l	Can occur as a by-product of the disinfection process or can be associated with industrial pollution.
Tetrachloroethene/Trichloroethene – Sum	10 µg/l	The presence of these organic solvents may be an indication of industrial pollution.
Tetrachloromethane	3 µg/l	
1,2 Dichloroethane	3 µg/l	
Total organic carbon (TOC)	No abnormal change mg C/l	This parameter assesses the organic content of the water.
Individual pesticides	0.1 µg/l	Associated with the use of these plant protection substances within drinking water catchments for weed control by agriculture, industry and local authorities. The standards are set well below the levels which might cause health problems, but levels should be minimised by good practice and appropriate controls. We measure the wide range of substances that may be present.
Total Pesticides	0.5 µg/l	
Total indicative dose (for radioactivity)	0.1 mSv/year	These parameters are measured as part of initial screening for radioactivity in drinking water. NI Water sources have been assessed as very low risk.
Tritium (for radioactivity)	100 Bq/l	

We also carry out extensive monitoring of our supplies for cryptosporidium through sampling of raw and final treated water. **Home-brewers** may be interested in the Calcium, Magnesium, Carbonate, Sodium, Sulphate, Chloride and pH levels of their water supply.

If you cannot locate the information you require, please contact us at waterline@niwater.com.

WATER SUPPLY ZONE - ZN0401 - Dunore Point Antrim
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Parameter	U/A & Freq.	No. of samples planned per annum	No. of samples taken in year	PCV Auth Dep	No. Of samples contravening PCV	% of samples contravening PCV	Concentration or value (all samples)		
							Min.	Mean	Max.
1,2 Dichloroethane	ug/l	S	8	8	0	0.000	< 0.100	< 0.100	< 0.100
2,4-D	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.001	< 0.002	< 0.004
2,4-DB	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.003	< 0.005	< 0.012
Aluminium	ug Al/l	S	52	52	0	0.000	11.000	27.019	170.000
Ammonium	mg NH4/l	S	52	52	0	0.000	< 0.012	< 0.012	< 0.012
Antimony	ug/l Sb	S	8	8	0	0.000	0.100	0.124	0.140
Arsenic	ug/l As	S	8	8	0	0.000	< 0.300	< 0.314	0.350
Asulam	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.005	< 0.008	< 0.017
Bentazone	ug/l	AS	32	33	0	0.000	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.003
Benzene	ug/l	S	8	8	0	0.000	< 0.020	< 0.025	< 0.041
Benzo(a)pyrene	ug/l	S	8	8	0	0.000	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.002
Boron	mg/l B	S	8	8	0	0.000	0.011	0.013	0.014
Bromate	ug BrO3/l	S	8	8	0	0.000	< 0.300	< 0.539	< 0.990
Bromoxynil	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.004	< 0.006	< 0.013
Cadmium	ug/l Cd	S	8	8	0	0.000	0.010	0.010	0.011
Chloride	mg Cl/l	S	8	8	0	0.000	22.000	25.000	28.000
Chlorotoluron	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.002	< 0.002	< 0.003
Chlorpyrifos	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.002	< 0.003	< 0.008
Chromium	ug/l Cr	S	8	8	0	0.000	0.170	0.284	0.460
Clopyralid	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.004	< 0.007	0.026
Clostridium perfringens (sulph red)	No./100 ml	AS	32	32	0	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Colony Counts 22	No./1 ml	S	52	52	0	0.000	0.000	2.019	50.000
Colony Counts 37 (48hrs)	No./1 ml	S	52	52	0	0.000	0.000	0.077	1.000
Colour	mg/l Pt/Co	S	52	52	0	0.000	1.000	1.137	1.800
Conductivity	uS/cm 20 C	S	52	53	0	0.000	320.000	372.453	410.000
Copper	mg Cu/l	S	8	8	0	0.000	0.001	0.004	0.014
Cyanide	ug/l CN	AS	32	32	0	0.000	2.600	< 4.059	< 5.500
Dicamba	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.012	< 0.013	< 0.017
Dichlorprop	ug/l	AS	32	33	0	0.000	< 0.001	< 0.002	< 0.004
Diflufenican	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.003	< 0.004	< 0.009
Dimethenamid	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	0.000	< 0.004	< 0.006
Diuron	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.003	< 0.003	< 0.006
E. coli	No./100 ml	S	168	168	0	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Enterococci	No./100ml	S	8	8	0	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Epoxiconazole	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.002	< 0.003	< 0.005
Fenpropimorph	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.003	< 0.004	< 0.009
Flufenacet	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	0.000	< 0.003	< 0.005
Fluoride	mg F/l	S	8	8	0	0.000	< 0.020	< 0.021	0.026
Fluroxypyr	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.005	< 0.011	< 0.018
Free - Residual disinfectant	mg Cl/l	S	168	168	0	0.000	0.050	0.397	0.900
Glyphosate	ug/l	AS	32	31	0	0.000	< 0.003	< 0.007	< 0.017
Hydrogen Ion	pH value	S	52	52	0	0.000	7.280	7.591	8.320
Iron	ug Fe/l	S	52	52	0	0.000	< 2.000	< 8.975	53.000
Isoproturon	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.002	< 0.002	< 0.003
Lead	ug Pb/l	S	8	8	0	0.000	< 0.100	< 0.101	0.110
Linuron	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.003	< 0.006	< 0.006
MCPA	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.001	< 0.006	0.019
MCPB	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.004	< 0.006	< 0.014
Manganese	ug Mn/l	S	52	52	0	0.000	< 0.100	< 0.339	1.600
Mecoprop	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.001	< 0.003	0.006
Mercury	ug/l Hg	S	8	5	0	0.000	< 0.010	< 0.022	< 0.050
Metalaxyl	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.004	< 0.006	< 0.012
Metamitron	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.003	< 0.004	< 0.007
Metazachlor	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.003	< 0.004	< 0.010
Metoxuron	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.002	< 0.004	< 0.008
Metribuzin	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	< 0.002	< 0.003	< 0.008
Nickel	ug Ni/l	S	8	8	0	0.000	1.200	2.813	6.200
Nitrate	mg N/l	S	8	8	0	0.000	< 0.400	< 1.993	3.900
Nitrate/Nitrite Formula		S	8	8	0	0.000	< 0.000	< 0.039	< 0.078
Nitrite	mg N/l	S	8	8	0	0.000	< 0.010	< 0.010	< 0.010
Odour	Diln No	S	52	52	0	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Oxamyl	ug/l	AS	32	32	0	0.000	0.000	< 0.009	< 0.023
PAH - Sum of four substances	ug/l	S	8	8	0	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.004

WATER SUPPLY ZONE - ZN0401 - Dunore Point Antrim
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Parameter	U/A & Freq.	No. of samples planned per annum	No. of samples taken in year	PCV Auth Dep	No. Of samples contraven ing PCV	% of samples contraven ing PCV	Concentration or value (all samples)		
							Min.	Mean	Max.
Pendimethalin	AS	32	32		0	0.000	< 0.003	< 0.004	< 0.008
Pesticides - Total Substances	AS	32	32		0	0.000	0.000	0.046	0.054
Phorate	AS	32	32		0	0.000	< 0.004	< 0.006	< 0.012
Pirimicarb	AS	32	32		0	0.000	< 0.002	< 0.003	< 0.008
Propachlor	AS	32	32		0	0.000	< 0.004	< 0.006	< 0.012
Propiconazole	AS	32	32		0	0.000	< 0.002	< 0.002	< 0.003
Propyzamide	AS	32	32		0	0.000	< 0.002	< 0.003	< 0.007
Prothioconazole	AS	32	32		0	0.000	< 0.002	< 0.005	< 0.006
Selenium	S	8	8		0	0.000	< 0.200	< 0.225	0.270
Sodium	S	8	8		0	0.000	15.000	18.125	19.000
Sulphate	S	8	8		0	0.000	64.000	74.000	79.000
Taste	S	52	52		0	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Tebuconazole	AS	32	32		0	0.000	< 0.002	< 0.004	0.049
Tetrachloroethene/Trichloroethene - S	S	8	8		0	0.000	< 0.200	< 0.200	< 0.200
Tetrachloromethane	S	8	8		0	0.000	< 0.100	< 0.100	< 0.100
Total - Residual disinfectant	S	168	168		0	0.000	0.110	0.547	0.930
Total Indicative Dose	AS	2	2		0	0.000	< 0.100	< 0.100	< 0.100
Total Organic Carbon	S	8	8		0	0.000	1.900	2.400	3.100
Total Trihalomethanes	S	8	8		0	0.000	33.000	40.875	56.000
Total coliforms	S	168	168		0	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Triclopyr	AS	32	32		0	0.000	< 0.004	< 0.006	< 0.012
Tritium	AS	2	2		0	0.000	< 10.000	< 10.000	< 10.000
Turbidity	S	52	53		0	0.000	0.100	0.153	0.290

Commentary on Water Quality:

A: Supply point authorisation for pesticides and related products.

Population of zone = 65890

This zone has a surface water source :R1501

PCV Exceedances:

Water Quality was satisfactory

Notes:

PCV = Prescribed Concentration or Value

U = Undertaking

S = Standard Sampling Frequency

R = Reduced Sampling Frequency

A = Authorised Supply Point