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## **Earthy-smelling water remains safe to drink**

**TORONTO** – Works and Emergency Services reports that an earthy taste and odour in Toronto’s water supply has become noticeable during the past few days. Taste and odour episodes are caused by seasonal biological changes in Lake Ontario and typically occur in the late summer or early fall. Toronto’s tap water continues to be safe to drink during these episodes.

Taste and odour episodes are caused by the presence of a natural-occurring compound called geosmin at extremely low levels (measured in parts per trillion) in Lake Ontario. Geosmin is not harmful to public health and the City’s water quality is not otherwise affected. Simple home remedies may be used to reduce taste and odour in drinking water, such as keeping a jug of water in the fridge and adding ice cubes or a few drops of lemon juice.

Two of Toronto’s four water filtration plants are permanently retrofitted with granular activated carbon systems, which run continuously and remove geosmin. The other two water filtration plants - R. L. Clark in the west end and F. J. Horgan in the east end - have powdered activated carbon systems, which must be activated at the time of a taste and odour episode. The carbon systems in these two plants have been activated and it generally takes some time (from a few hours to a few days) for the filtered water to reach consumers’ taps. The carbon systems reduce taste and odour but may not eliminate it entirely.

Although it is difficult to predict when conditions will return to normal, taste and odour episodes will generally dissipate after the lake water temperature starts to go down (below 15 degrees Celcius).

Additional information about taste and odour episodes is available from the Ontario Water Works Research Consortium at [www.owwrc.com](http://www.owwrc.com). For information on Toronto’s water and wastewater systems, residents may call Works and Emergency Services’ Waste and Water Education Line at (416) 392-4546.

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