

Why do these occur?

Fungal spores and bacteria are naturally present in the environment. Fungi like to grow in warm, damp, humid conditions and thrive where there is an additional source of nutrients.

These growths are known as biofilms or 'microbial slime'. When they occur they are most noticeable in bathrooms and kitchens. These growths can occur in various colours such as black, red and pink. If not dealt with at their onset some biofilms can grow into certain materials and leave a permanent stain.

Kitchens and bathrooms are generally the warmest and most humid rooms in the house. They also provide an environment that has numerous rich sources of nutrients such as propellants from aerosols (deodorants and hairspray), waste food and left over soap! These sources of nutrients can promote and accelerate the growth of fungal colonies.

What can I do to prevent growth?

One of the best ways to prevent fungal growth is to improve ventilation by using extractor fans and if necessary slightly opening a window to allow damp areas in kitchens and bathrooms to dry rapidly.

It is also important to eliminate the food sources for the fungi and bacteria to prevent growth, therefore keeping these areas clean and free from potential food sources will limit growth.

Where do they occur?

They can be commonly found in the following locations:

- On shower curtains or towels - particularly around the bottom
- On the end of cold water taps, kitchen bathroom or outside - particularly if they are leaking
- In washing machines - particularly around the powder drawer
- In toilet cisterns and bowls.
- On or in shower heads
- Around bathrooms shower rooms - particularly on the grout or sealant strips
- In refrigerator drip trays
- In waste traps and overflows connected to sinks
- In dehumidifiers

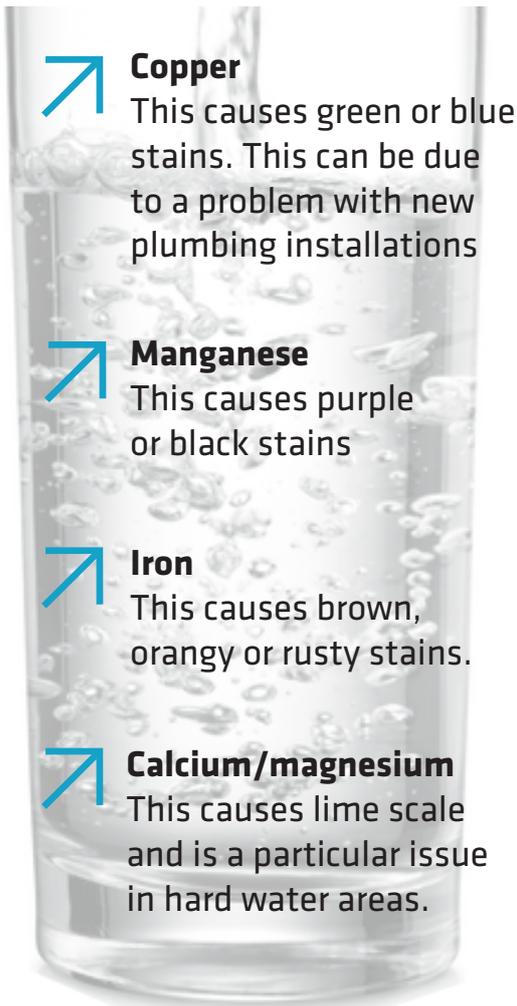


Staining

Occasionally other sorts of stains can be observed which are not due to biofilms but due to fine particulate material.

The presence of this type of material is generally associated with a disturbance in the property or distribution system.

Generally such deposits can be rinsed away.



Copper

This causes green or blue stains. This can be due to a problem with new plumbing installations



Manganese

This causes purple or black stains



Iron

This causes brown, orangy or rusty stains.



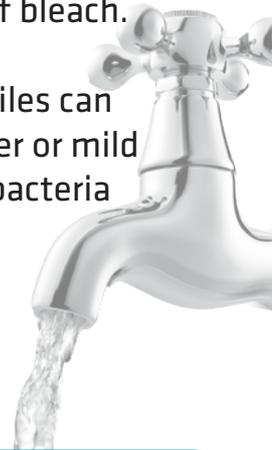
Calcium/magnesium

This causes lime scale and is a particular issue in hard water areas.

How can I remove biofilms?

Black slime associated with tap fittings can be removed by cleaning the inside of the tap or around the base of the tap with a small brush dipped in a mild solution of bleach.

Kitchen surfaces and bathroom tiles can be wiped with a household cleaner or mild bleach solution that will kill the bacteria and fungal spores.



Useful contacts

If you have any questions about the water supplied to you, please contact Independent Water Networks:

Phone: 02920 028 711

Website: www.iwnl.co.uk

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) is responsible for ensuring the quality of public water supplies. The DWI can be contacted at the following:

Phone: 0300 068 6400

Email: dwi.enquiries@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.dwi.gov.uk



For more information on hard water, contact IWNL.