

Reverse osmosis systems tend to work quietly under the sink, day after day, until one morning your glass fills slower than your patience or your “pure” water tastes like the garden hose. In San Dimas, where tap water is generally safe but often hard and heavily chlorinated, reverse osmosis (RO) setups and other water filtration systems work hard for a living. When something goes wrong, the question becomes simple: can you repair it yourself, or is it time to call someone in or even replace the whole system?

This overview walks through how a typical under sink reverse osmosis system works, what usually fails, and how to repair the most common problems. The perspective is practical and rooted in what actually happens in Southern California homes, not in lab conditions.

Quick context: what is a water filtration system and how does RO fit in?

The term “water filtration system” covers a wide range of equipment. At the simplest end you have a single sediment cartridge under the sink. At the more complex end, a full treatment train: whole house sediment filter, carbon filter, softener or conditioner, and a dedicated RO system for drinking water.

In practical terms, a home water filtration system is any installed device that water passes through before it reaches your tap, with the job of removing or reducing unwanted contaminants. That may include:

Sediment such as sand or rust, which causes cloudiness and clogs fixtures.

Chlorine and chloramines, which protect public water supplies but create bad taste and odor. Hardness minerals like calcium and magnesium, which leave scale and spots. Dissolved solids such as salts, metals, or nitrates, which RO systems are particularly good at reducing.

Reverse osmosis sits at the “fine polishing” end of that spectrum. A typical under sink RO uses a prefilter (sediment and carbon), a semi permeable membrane, and a postfilter (usually carbon) to strip out a large portion of dissolved solids. It sends the cleaned water to a small storage tank and the waste stream to a drain.

When someone asks “How does a water filtration system work?” in the context of a drinking water RO, the practical answer is: it strains out physical particles, adsorbs chemicals like chlorine onto carbon, then uses pressure to push water through a membrane that retains most dissolved ions, and finally runs the treated water through one last polishing stage before it reaches your faucet.

San Dimas water: what you are starting with

Before talking about repairs, it helps to know the water you are treating.

San Dimas tap water is supplied by local providers such as Golden State Water Company and municipal systems that blend groundwater with imported water from regional wholesalers. According to publicly available water quality reports, the water generally meets state and federal safety standards for regulated contaminants. So if you ask “Is San Dimas water safe to drink?”, the regulatory answer is yes for most households, barring special plumbing or private plumbing issues.

That does not mean it tastes great. The two things San Dimas homeowners complain about most are:

Hardness. Many parts of the city have moderately to very hard water. Scale on fixtures, cloudy glassware, and stiff laundry are common. This is why people often ask “Does San Dimas have hard water?” The short version: yes, in many service zones.

Chlorine and taste. To keep the water microbiologically safe through miles of mains, utilities maintain a disinfectant residual. That often leaves water with a noticeable chlorine flavor at the tap.

So when someone installs a water filtration system in San Dimas, they are usually targeting three things: taste and odor, scale control, and extra protection from dissolved solids. Reverse osmosis is particularly popular for drinking water at the kitchen sink, often paired with a whole house sediment and carbon filter or a softener.

This background matters because it drives both the type of system installed and the kinds of problems you will see when it needs repair.

How long do systems and filters last?

Many repair calls stem from simple neglect rather than true failure. Homeowners are often unsure how often water filters should be replaced or how often a water filtration system should be serviced.

For a typical under sink RO in a home on San Dimas city water:

Sediment and carbon prefilters usually last about 6 to 12 months, depending on usage and water quality.

The RO membrane often lasts 2 to 5 years. High hardness and heavy chlorine shorten that lifespan, which is one reason good carbon prefiltration is essential. The final carbon postfilter usually runs 12 months or so.

Whole house filters vary widely. Basic sediment cartridges may be good for 3 to 6 months. Large backwashing carbon systems may run several years before rebed. So when you ask "How long do water filtration systems last?", the honest range is 10 to 20 years for housings and valves if maintained, with the understanding that the cartridges and media inside are consumables.

You should consider replacing the entire system when repairs become frequent, the plastic housings or manifold show cracking or discoloration, or you cannot find replacement parts because the manufacturer has discontinued that product line. If you are asking "When should I replace my water filtration system?", a good practical rule is: when the cost of getting it working properly again is more than half the cost of a modern equivalent, or when it can no longer meet your water quality goals despite new filters.

Common symptoms: what is your system trying to tell you?

Most troubleshooting starts with a symptom. The most common questions I hear from San Dimas homeowners map directly to specific failure points.

Why is my water filtration system not working or "dead"?

Often the feed valve to the filter has been bumped off during storage cleaning, the tank valve is closed, or the system is in bypass mode. Less obvious causes include a clogged prefilter or a shut check valve inside the RO manifold.

Why is no water coming out of my water filter?

For RO systems, a failed storage tank, clogged sediment filter, or a fouled RO membrane are usual suspects. For simple under sink carbon filters, a crushed or kinked line or a blocked cartridge is more likely.

Why is my water filtration system slow?

Slow production points to a clogged prefilter, an aging membrane, low line pressure, or a nearly full RO storage tank with little pressure left. In San Dimas, multi story homes sometimes see low pressure at upper floor sinks, which only makes RO production slower.

Why is my water filter leaking?

Leaking often comes from loose housings after a filter change, worn O rings, cracked housings, or push fit fittings that have been pulled partially out. Undersink storage and cleaning often jostles these fittings.

Why is my water filter making a noise?

RO systems in particular sometimes “gurgle” as waste water passes to the drain. That is normal. Clicking or humming can come from a booster pump. A sudden whistle or hissing can signal a partially closed valve or a relief port venting.

Why is my filtered water cloudy or full of bubbles?

Right after filter changes or tank refills, trapped air in the cartridge or storage tank can make the water look milky. If the water clears in a few seconds in the glass, that is usually just air. Persistently cloudy water that does not clear suggests fine particulate getting past a damaged filter.

Why does my filtered water taste bad?

A spent carbon filter, exhausted postfilter, fouled storage tank, or bacterial growth inside the system can all cause off tastes. If your carbon is used up, you may also simply be tasting the underlying tap water including chlorine and hardness minerals.

Why is my water still hard after filtration?

Because many filtration systems, including most RO units, are designed to improve taste and remove some dissolved solids, not fully soften all water that enters the house. If your only treatment is an under sink RO, your bathroom fixtures will still see hard water. If you have a softener and it is not working with your filter, that is a separate issue, often related to salt level, resin problems, or incorrect plumbing order.

All of these issues are manageable, but they benefit from a deliberate approach instead of guessing.

Here is a simple, short checklist that helps narrow down whether you are facing a minor maintenance item or a deeper problem:

1) Look at water flow and pressure.

If all fixtures in the home are slow, you may have a municipal pressure issue or a main line problem, not just a filtration issue. If only the filtered tap is slow, the restriction is in the system.

2) Check for visible leaks or drips.

Feel under the housings and around fittings. Even a small damp spot gives you a starting point.

3) Note taste, odor, and appearance.

If the water looks clear but tastes like chlorine, suspect exhausted carbon. If it is cloudy or sandy, suspect sediment issues.

4) Think about timing.

If it has been more than a year since you changed filters, odds are high your problem is simply clogged or exhausted cartridges.

5) Listen for the system cycling.

RO systems that seem to run and discharge to drain constantly may have a bad shutoff valve, a tank that cannot hold pressure, or a damaged check valve.

These observations help you decide whether this is a do it yourself repair or whether you should bring in a professional.

Can you repair your water filtration system yourself?

Many homeowners in San Dimas handle basic filter changes and minor RO repairs themselves. If you ask “Can I repair my water filtration system myself?” or “Can I change my water filter myself?”, the answer is often yes for routine cartridge replacement, minor leak tightening, and occasional line or fitting replacement.

You probably want a professional when:

You see cracks in housings or manifolds.

The system is built into a complex manifold without obvious filter housings. You have a whole house backwashing filter or softener with a control valve that is throwing error codes. There is evidence of contamination, mold, or biofilm inside the system and you are not comfortable disassembling and sanitizing it. You have made more than one attempt and the system still leaks or will not produce water.

A licensed plumber or a water treatment specialist is usually the one who repairs water filtration systems in a professional capacity. Not all plumbers love niche filtration work, so it can be worth asking on the phone how often they work on RO systems and whole house filters. For anything that involves soldering, cutting into main lines, or rebuilding a softener or backwashing valve, you generally do need a plumber or a dedicated water treatment company.

Cost: repair or replace?

“How much does it cost to repair a water filtration system?” depends heavily on what is actually wrong.

Basic under sink RO filter set (sediment, carbon, postfilter) in the San Dimas area typically runs 40 to 120 dollars in parts, depending on brand and whether you choose OEM or compatible cartridges. A new RO membrane often adds 40 to 100 dollars. If you pay a professional to come to the house, labor is usually another 100 to 250 dollars depending on time on site and company overhead.

So a full refresh of an existing RO system often lands between 150 and 350 dollars if you do the work yourself and between 250 and 500 dollars if you hire someone, unless parts are unusual or there is hidden plumbing work.

“How much does a water filtration system cost?” for a new install in San Dimas:

Basic under sink RO systems often run 300 to 800 dollars installed, depending on quality and features.

Higher end systems with remineralization, pumps, and designer faucets can reach 800 to 1,500 dollars installed. Whole house cartridge based systems may run 800 to 2,000 dollars. Softener plus RO packages often fall in the 2,000 to 4,000 dollar range installed by reputable firms, though aggressive sales outfits sometimes quote far higher.

So is it cheaper to repair or replace a water filtration system? For a system under 10 years old with intact housings, repair via new filters and perhaps a membrane is usually worth it. For older plastic housings, damaged manifolds, or off brand systems with no available parts, replacement often makes more financial and safety sense.

A steady rule of thumb: if the repair quote rises above half the price of a comparable new system and your current setup is more than a decade old, replacing is usually the smarter choice.

Step by step: how to repair a typical reverse osmosis system

Although RO designs vary, most under sink units in San Dimas share core components. Think of this as a step by step overview rather than a rigid script, since you should always follow the manufacturer's specific instructions and shutoffs.

Here is a practical five stage approach that covers most repairs:

1) Isolate and depressurize the system

Turn off the cold water feed to the RO. This is usually a small valve on the line that tees off your cold supply under the sink. Close the valve on top of the RO storage tank. Open the RO faucet to relieve pressure. Let water trickle out until the flow stops. This step protects you from surprise sprays and reduces the risk of damaging threads or O rings.

2) Inspect housings, lines, and fittings

With pressure off and the faucet open, look and feel around the system. Check the clear or opaque housings that hold cartridges for any cracks, crazing, or discoloration. Check plastic tubing for kinks, abrasion, or signs of rubbing. Gently tug each push fit connection to see if it is fully seated. If your issue is a leak and you are wondering how to find a leak in your water filtration system, use a dry paper towel along joints to spot tiny damp spots. Small leaks often track back to a dirty or flattened O ring inside a housing or to a fitting that has been partially pulled out during cleaning.

3) Replace filters and, if needed, the membrane

For a typical repair, you will be changing at least the sediment and carbon prefilters and often the postfilter. Use the supplied wrench to unscrew each housing. Remove the spent cartridge and note which housing it came from. Clean the inside of each housing with warm soapy water, rinse thoroughly, and inspect the O ring. Lubricate O rings lightly with food grade silicone grease and reseal them. Insert new cartridges and hand tighten the housings, then snug with the wrench without over tightening. If your TDS readings or taste suggest the RO membrane is exhausted, follow the unit's instructions to remove and replace it. Membranes often live in a horizontal tube separate from the vertical prefilter housings. This is where the question "How long does a reverse osmosis filter last?" becomes relevant: if you are at the 2 to 5 year mark or see little change between tap TDS and RO TDS, replacing the membrane is wise.

4) Sanitize and restore pressure

If you have had bad odors, slimy surfaces, or visible growth, take the extra time to sanitize. With cartridges removed, you can typically add a small amount of unscented household bleach to the housings, reassemble without cartridges, open the feed and tank valves, and let the system fill. After a short contact time recommended by your manufacturer, shut off, drain, reinstall new cartridges, and then flush thoroughly until the bleach smell disappears. Restore feed and tank valves and allow the storage tank to fill. This step directly addresses "Why does my filtered water taste bad?" when the cause is internal growth rather than just exhausted carbon.

5) Check system performance and reset any indicators



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Once the tank has refilled, test the RO faucet. Flow should be stronger if a clogged prefilter was the culprit. Taste should be clean if new carbon is working. If your system has a filter change light or electronic monitor, follow the instructions on how to reset your water filtration system so that future reminders are accurate. Use a TDS meter if you have one to compare tap and RO water. A healthy RO often cuts TDS by 80 to 95 percent on municipal water. If your system includes pressure regulators or a booster pump, verify the settings. To increase water pressure on your filtration system, you may need to adjust these components or address low feed pressure from the home plumbing.

This compressed sequence covers the majority of RO issues in one organized effort. For under sink carbon only filters, the process is similar but without the membrane or tank.

Special cases: whole house filters, stuck cartridges, and freezing

People sometimes ask "How do you fix a whole house water filter?" or "How do you fix an under sink water filter?" without realizing that the underlying steps are nearly identical. You isolate the filter, relieve pressure, open the housing, change the cartridge, inspect and lubricate O rings, then restore flow and check for leaks.

Three special issues deserve a bit more attention.

Stuck water filter cartridges

A stuck filter housing is a common frustration. To remove a stuck water filter, first double check that all upstream and downstream valves are closed and that you have bled off pressure from a nearby faucet. Use the proper housing wrench and support the plumbing while you turn to avoid twisting copper or CPVC. Gently tapping the housing with the plastic wrench can break loose scale. Avoid using pipe wrenches or channel locks directly on plastic housings, as they can crack under point pressure.

Freezing risks

“Can a water filter system freeze and break?” Yes. Undersink locations in San Dimas are usually protected, but garage mounted whole house filters and softeners are vulnerable during cold snaps. If a cartridge housing or manifold freezes full of water, the expanding ice can crack the plastic. If you suspect freezing, inspect housings closely for hairline cracks before repressurizing. In rarely heated spaces, insulation or relocation of equipment may be necessary.

Interaction with softeners

Many San Dimas homes pair a softener with RO. When someone says “Why is my water softener not working with my filter?”, the most common answer is incorrect plumbing order. Ideally, sediment and carbon prefiltration sit ahead of the softener when needed, and the RO feed is taken from softened water. If the RO is fed from raw hard water instead, membrane life suffers and scale can clog the flow restrictor or drain line, producing slow output and noisy operation.

Performance issues: chlorine, hardness, and clogs

Sometimes the complaint is not mechanical but performance based.

If your water filter is not removing chlorine and you can still smell or taste disinfectant, you may be dealing with exhausted carbon, too rapid a flow rate through a small cartridge, or chloramine rather than free chlorine. Chloramine needs special catalytic carbon or longer contact time. In such cases, a larger or more capable carbon system ahead of your RO may be the “best water filtration system for hard water and chlorine” in practice, combined with a softener for scale.

If your water filter keeps clogging, inspect the upstream water. Construction work, main flushes, or well issues can send surges of sediment that blind a fine cartridge. You may need a dual stage setup with a coarse prefilter ahead of a finer one, or a self cleaning sediment filter instead of a single small cartridge.

If you are experiencing low water pressure after a water filter, the restriction may be too fine a micron rating, a partially closed bypass valve, or a filter sized for a smaller home. Many cartridge type whole house systems are “marketing sized” to look good on paper but cannot handle peak flows in a busy San Dimas household with multiple showers. Upsizing to larger diameter housings and cartridges often solves chronic pressure complaints.

Is it worth repairing your filtration system?

Whether it is worth repairing a water filtration system depends on more than money. Ask yourself three things.

First, what are your goals? If you installed the system years ago just to take the edge off chlorine, and you are now more concerned about hardness or specific contaminants, a simple repair may restore function but not meet your current needs.

Second, how old and supportable is the equipment? If your system is proportionally young, parts are readily available, and the housings are in good shape, repair is usually the logical move.

Third, what is your tolerance for risk and downtime? If you are comfortable working under the sink and can live without the RO for a day, trying a repair yourself is reasonable. If you have had repeated leaks that damaged cabinets or you rely on the system for a medically necessary water quality, professional service may be the safer path.

For San Dimas homeowners on city water, a well maintained RO or whole house filter is typically worth repairing at least once or twice through its lifespan. The cost spread between filters and an entirely new system is wide enough that discarding a functional housing with only clogged filters is wasteful. Over time, though, plastics age and design standards improve, so eventually replacement becomes the more rational choice.

When to call a professional in San Dimas

So who repairs water filtration systems around San Dimas? Most work is done by a mix of plumbing contractors and specialized water treatment companies. When you call, describe your system type: “three stage [Shower Valve Repair](#) under sink RO,” “whole house sediment and carbon filter,” or “softener plus RO.” Ask whether they service that type regularly.

You should consider calling a pro when you notice structural damage, repeated leaks despite new O rings and correct tightening, strange electrical behavior from powered valves or booster pumps, or any interaction with your main water line or water heater that you are not comfortable tackling.

A good technician will not only repair the immediate issue but also answer key questions along the way: how often should water filters be replaced in your exact setup, how often your particular water filtration system should be serviced, and what maintenance it needs to continue delivering safe, good tasting water in the context of San Dimas tap conditions.

Handled that way, your reverse osmosis system and its supporting filters can serve you quietly and reliably for many years instead of becoming another under sink mystery that everyone avoids touching.

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