

Cloudy filtered water is one of those problems that makes people nervous fast. The glass looks milky, you start wondering what is actually in your San Dimas tap water, and before long you are questioning whether your entire water filtration system is working at all.

I see this often in homes around San Dimas, La Verne, and Glendora. Most of the time, the cause is fixable and not dangerous. Occasionally, the cloudiness points to a failing filter, a plumbing issue, or a system that has simply reached the end of its useful life.

Let's go through what is really happening when your filtered water turns cloudy, how San Dimas water quality plays into it, and what you can realistically do yourself versus when to call a professional.

First question: is the cloudy water actually dangerous?

Before talking about filters, it helps to separate appearance from actual risk.

A quick test tells you a lot: fill a clear glass with the cloudy water and set it on the counter.

If the cloudiness fades from the bottom up within a minute or two, what you are seeing is usually dissolved air forming tiny bubbles. That is common after filtration, especially with reverse osmosis systems, new cartridges, or pressure changes in the line. This type of cloudiness is usually harmless.

If the water stays milky, has visible specks that settle slowly, or shows an oily sheen on top, you are probably dealing with sediment, very fine particulate, or possibly bacterial growth in the filter housing or lines. That deserves more attention.

Taste and odor matter too. Flat or "empty" tasting water after installing a new filter is normal for a short time. A musty, earthy, metallic, or rotten egg smell is not. When your filtered water tastes bad and looks cloudy, I stop talking in "probably" and start recommending action: at minimum, stop using that filter for drinking and investigate.

What is in San Dimas tap water?

San Dimas sits over local groundwater basins and also receives imported surface water through regional wholesalers. Much of the city is served by Golden State Water Company, which in turn receives water from sources that include Three Valleys Municipal Water District and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, along with local wells. Some parts of the area may also be on different retail water systems or private wells.

Local tap water is considered generally safe to drink by regulatory standards, but it has some characteristics that show up in your kitchen and bathroom:

San Dimas has hard water. The hardness often ranges from moderately hard to hard, driven by calcium and magnesium picked up from local geology. That is why you see scale on faucets, white spots on dishes, and mineral buildup in your coffee maker.

Total dissolved solids (TDS) are relatively high compared with softer regions. That affects taste and can influence how quickly filters clog. People who switch to reverse osmosis (RO) around here usually notice a clear difference in taste because RO strips out a large portion of those dissolved minerals.

Chlorine and sometimes chloramine are used for disinfection. If your water filter is not removing chlorine effectively, your water may still smell like a swimming pool. Some carbon filters handle that very well, others only marginally, especially if they are undersized or overdue for replacement.

San Dimas water meets legal safety standards, but “safe” and “pleasant” are not the same, which is why so many households add point of use or whole house filtration.

What is a water filtration system, really?

Homeowners often think of “a water filter” as the plastic pitcher in the fridge or the cartridge under the sink, but in practice a water filtration system is a chain of components working together.

At its core, a residential water filtration system is any setup that passes water through one or more media to remove specific contaminants or improve taste, odor, or hardness. The main types I see in San Dimas homes include:

Under sink carbon systems. Usually a single or dual cartridge under the kitchen sink. They remove chlorine, some organics, and improve taste and odor. These are common for people who just want better tasting water from one faucet.

Reverse osmosis systems. Often a multi stage system with sediment pre filter, carbon, the RO membrane, and sometimes a polishing filter or remineralization stage, plus a storage tank. These remove a large portion of dissolved solids, including many salts, metals, and some contaminants that basic carbon filters leave behind. They are popular in hard water areas.

Whole house filters. Typically installed where the main water line enters the home. They may include large sediment cartridges, carbon tanks, or media beds tailored to issues like chlorine, chloramine, or specific contaminants. They treat all water in the house, not just drinking water.

Water softeners. Not strictly “filters” in the traditional sense, but often lumped together. A softener exchanges calcium and magnesium for sodium or potassium, reducing hardness. Many houses in San Dimas combine a softener for the whole house with a dedicated drinking water filter at the kitchen sink.

Each of these systems works differently, so the question “How does a water filtration system work?” has several answers. A carbon filter adsorbs contaminants onto its surface. A sediment filter physically strains out particles. A reverse osmosis membrane pushes water through a semi permeable film that rejects many dissolved ions. A softener uses ion exchange.

Cloudy filtered water can come from any of these, but the underlying cause differs.

The most common reasons filtered water looks cloudy

Once you understand how the pieces work, the usual suspects start to make sense.

Trapped air and microbubbles

By far the most common reason filtered water looks cloudy is simple air mixed into the water stream. When you open a faucet after installing new cartridges, servicing a system, or turning the main water back on, air pockets that were trapped under pressure break free and form a milky swirl of tiny bubbles.

This happens a lot with:

- New under sink filters right after installation or cartridge changes
- Reverse osmosis systems that have just had the tank depressurized and recharged
- Whole house filters that were recently serviced or had housings opened

If the glass clears from bottom to top within a couple of minutes, you are most likely seeing exactly this. In that case, your water filtration system is probably working, and the cloudiness is temporary. Running the affected faucet for a few minutes often helps purge the remaining air.

Fine carbon dust and filter media

When a carbon block or granular carbon filter is new, there is often residual carbon fines inside the cartridge. Even when manufacturers pre rinse filters at the factory, some dust remains and will wash into the first few gallons of water.

That can cause a grayish or black tinted cloudiness, often with small specks that settle on the bottom of the glass. Normally, a thorough flush after installing or replacing the cartridge clears this. If not, either the filter was not flushed long enough, or it is defective.

If you ask “How do I know if my water filter is bad?” carbon dust alone is not the answer, but persistent dark particles beyond the first few gallons are a warning sign, especially if water flow is also poor or the taste is off.

Hard water and mineral precipitation

San Dimas hard water can cause cloudiness even after filtration, especially if you rely only on basic sediment or carbon units and not a softener or RO system.

Imagine you fill a glass with hot water, set it down, and after cooling it looks cloudy and leaves a ring. You are seeing dissolved calcium and magnesium that have come out of solution as the temperature changed. This is one reason people ask “Why is my water still hard after filtration?” The answer is usually that the system they installed is not designed to remove hardness, only sediment or chlorine.

If you have a softener plus a separate filter, and you are still seeing mineral cloudiness, there might be another problem. Your water softener may not be working properly with your filter, or the softener is out of salt, bypassed, or misprogrammed. That is when a water test and a check of both units as a pair becomes important.

Bacterial growth and biofilm

This is the scenario I take most seriously. Any time you pass water through a medium that traps organic material, you create a place where bacteria can grow if the filter is not changed on schedule or the system is poorly sanitized.

Signs that cloudiness might be biological:

Water looks hazy, not bubbly, and does not clear quickly.

You notice a musty or earthy smell.

There is slimy residue inside filter housings or on the cartridges when you open them.

Overdue filters, systems left unused for long stretches, or units installed in warm, sunlit areas are especially prone to this. If your filtered water tastes bad and the filters are older than the manufacturer recommends, stop drinking from that system until it is serviced.

Sediment and construction issues

Any time a water utility or plumber works on lines, sediment can be disturbed. After main line repairs, homes sometimes get a rush of cloudy water with visible particles. Normally, that clears within a day. If you have a whole house filter, it may catch most of that sediment, but the cartridge can clog quickly and begin to restrict flow.

This is a common reason people suddenly ask “Why is my water filtration system slow?” or “What causes low water pressure after a water filter?” The short answer is that the post construction sediment plugged up what used to be a free flowing cartridge.

Whole house filters and under sink units that have not had their sediment stages changed on time will behave the same way even without a construction event. Flow drops, cloudiness or discoloration appears, and the system starts to strain.

When cloudy water is probably harmless vs when to worry

Here is a simple way I advise homeowners to triage cloudy water from their filters:

1. If the cloudiness clears from bottom to top within a few minutes and there is no strange odor or taste, it is probably air. Note whether it started after service or a new filter.
2. If you see light gray or black dust that fades after flushing several gallons through a new filter, you are likely seeing harmless carbon fines.
3. If the water stays milky, smells off, or shows a slimy film in housings, assume bacterial or organic growth and stop drinking from that tap until cleaned and serviced.
4. If particulate is visible and does not go away with flushing, you may have sediment from the main lines or a failing filter media bed.
5. If cloudiness appears mainly in hot water, consider hardness scale and look at your softener or heater.

That basic checklist will not diagnose everything, but it immediately separates routine filtration quirks from situations that merit professional help.

How often should filters be replaced and systems serviced?

Most cloudiness and taste complaints I see in San Dimas trace back to one simple issue: filters that are far beyond their intended lifespan.

Manufacturers publish replacement intervals for a reason, but those numbers assume typical water use and quality. In real homes with hard San Dimas water, filters usually fall on the shorter side of the range.

For common systems:

Sediment and carbon cartridges on under sink and whole house systems often need replacement every 6 to 12 months, sometimes sooner if water use is heavy or the source water is dirty.

Reverse osmosis pre filters and post filters generally last 6 to 12 months. The RO membrane itself might last 2 to 5 years, depending on incoming TDS, maintenance, and water pressure.

Refrigerator filters often claim 6 months. In hard water areas, that can be optimistic, especially if the fridge dispenser is the main drinking source for a large family.

Softener resin usually lasts many years, but the system still needs regular salt refills, occasional cleaning, and periodic checks to ensure regeneration settings match actual hardness.

As a rule of thumb, a water filtration system should be professionally serviced about once a year. That is also a good time to answer bigger questions: How long do water filtration systems last? When should I replace my water filtration system instead of just putting more filters in?

In practice, housings, valves, and manifolds on good quality systems often last 8 to 15 years. Cheaper plastic units sometimes start leaking or cracking much earlier. Once repairs begin to add up or replacement parts become hard to find, it often becomes more sensible to upgrade the entire system.

Common performance problems besides cloudiness

When filtered water turns cloudy, homeowners usually notice other symptoms as well. Problems tend to cluster. Here is how some of the most common complaints tie together.

Why is my water filtration system not working?

That vague statement can mean many things: no water at all, terrible flow, bad taste, or leaks. Most often, it is either a clogged cartridge, closed or mispositioned valve, depressurized RO tank, or a bypass line accidentally left open. Simple things come first: check the shutoff valves, look for kinks in flexible tubing, and confirm the system actually has water coming into it.

Why is no water coming out of my water filter?

If there is literally no water, either the inlet is closed, a check valve is stuck, or the cartridge is fully blocked. In reverse osmosis systems, a failed automatic shutoff valve or a completely spent membrane can also starve the faucet. I see this more in systems where filters have not been replaced on schedule.

Why is my reverse osmosis system not producing water?

Often, the storage tank has lost air pressure or the membrane is fouled. The system might also be in a prolonged fill cycle after filters were changed. If the tank feels completely light and empty but the system has been running for hours, something is wrong. If the tank feels heavy and full but the faucet trickles, tank pressure and clogged post filters are suspect.

Why is my water filter making a noise?

Common sources of noise include the RO drain line gurgling into the standpipe, vibration from a booster pump, or air pockets moving through lines. New RO installs sometimes gurgle for a day or two. Constant loud hammering or knocking, especially when other fixtures shut off, may indicate water hammer and justify adding arrestors.

Why is my water filter leaking?

Leaks usually come from loose housings, worn O rings, cracked sumps, or improperly seated cartridges. Whole house filters exposed to sunlight and temperature swings in garages age faster. Refrigerator filters sometimes leak because the O ring stayed stuck in the old filter port or the new filter did not seat fully.

Why is my water filtration system slow?

A slow system almost always points to a restriction: clogged pre filter, fouled membrane, [water filtration replacement & installation san dimas](#) undersized tubing, or low incoming pressure. In San Dimas, clogged sediment filters after line work by the water provider are a frequent cause. On RO units, a partially closed tank valve or tank bladder problem can mimic low production.

Why is my water filter not removing chlorine?

If tap water from a separate unfiltered faucet smells strongly of chlorine but the filtered water still does too, either the carbon is exhausted or the system is bypassed. If you recently changed filters and suddenly taste chlorine, verify that the new cartridge is the right type and oriented correctly, and that there is no unnoticed bypass line.

Why does my water still feel hard after filtration?

If you only have a basic sediment and carbon filter, it will not remove hardness at all. To actively reduce hardness, you need ion exchange (a softener) or RO at the point of use. If you already have a softener and the water feels hard, the softener may need salt, service, or reprogramming.

Cost: repair vs replace in real numbers

When people ask “How much does a water filtration system cost?” or “How much does it cost to repair a water filtration system?”, the honest answer is “it depends”. But ranges help you plan.

Here are typical cost ranges I see in Southern California for residential systems and repairs:

- Basic under sink carbon system: 150 to 400 for equipment, 150 to 300 for professional installation, 40 to 120 per year for cartridges
- Reverse osmosis drinking system: 300 to 800 for a good quality system, 200 to 400 for installation, 80 to 200 per year for filters and occasional membrane replacement
- Whole house sediment or carbon system: 600 to 2,500 depending on size and media, 400 to 1,200 for installation, media and cartridge costs vary widely
- Water softener: 800 to 2,500 installed for common residential setups, plus ongoing salt costs
- Typical repair visit: 150 to 300 for diagnosis and simple fixes, 200 to 500 or more if major parts like RO tanks, manifolds, or control valves are replaced

Is it worth repairing a water filtration system, or is it cheaper to repair or replace a water filtration system? The answer comes down to age, parts availability, and how many core components are failing at once.

If you are just replacing filters and O rings on a 5 year old system, repair is usually the clear choice. Once a unit is 10 or 15 years old, with multiple leaking housings or obsolete proprietary cartridges, replacing the system often makes more sense long term.

DIY vs professional help

Many parts of water filter maintenance are well within reach for a careful homeowner. The big question is not “Can I repair my water filtration system myself?” but “Which parts can I safely handle and which should a plumber or specialist do?”

Reasonable DIY tasks for many people:

Changing cartridge filters, as long as you know how to shut off water, relieve pressure, and re seal housings properly.

How do I change a water filter cartridge? Typically you close the inlet valve, open the downstream faucet to relieve pressure, unscrew the housing with a filter wrench, replace the cartridge and O ring, then slowly restore water and check for leaks.

Resetting a system after filter changes, such as opening and closing RO tank valves, flushing new carbon filters, or pressing any reset buttons on smart heads.

Finding a simple leak in a water filtration system. Often you can dry everything with a towel, then watch carefully as you restore water, looking for drips around housings, fittings, and tubing connections.

Where I recommend professional help:

Whole house filters tied into rigid copper or PEX lines, especially if you are not comfortable with cutting and re plumbing.

Reverse osmosis repairs beyond simple filter changes, such as diagnosing why a reverse osmosis system is not producing water, replacing membranes, or troubleshooting automatic shutoff valves.

Softener programming, resin replacement, or complex issues where your water softener is not working properly with your filter system.



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Situations involving freeze damage. Yes, a water filter system can freeze and break if installed in unprotected garages, exterior walls, or outdoor boxes without insulation. Cracked housings and busted fittings can flood a home if not handled carefully.

If you prefer to call someone, you have options. Licensed plumbers often handle basic filter installs and leak repairs. Specialized water treatment companies focus on design, sizing, and service of RO, softeners, and whole house systems. Asking "Who repairs water filtration systems in my area?" should lead you to both types. In either case, look for state licensing, insurance, and familiarity with local water conditions.

Improving flow, pressure, and reliability

Once the water runs clear and tastes good, the next complaints are usually about pressure and speed.

How do I increase water pressure on my filtration system?

First, eliminate avoidable restrictions: replace clogged pre filters, inspect for partially closed valves, and check tubing size. Some kits ship with undersized lines that choke flow. With RO systems, tank pressure matters. A

properly charged RO tank typically sits around 7 to 8 psi with no water in it. Too low or too high can both cause problems.

What causes low water pressure after a water filter?

If the whole house pressure drops right after installing a new main filter, the cartridge may be too fine for your flow rate, the housing undersized, or the plumbing constricted by fittings. In San Dimas homes with older galvanized lines, even a correctly sized filter can highlight existing restrictions in the system.

Why does my water filter keep clogging?

Repeated clogs can indicate significant sediment in the incoming water, especially after main line work. In that case, you may need staged filtration: a coarse sediment filter before a finer one, or a larger capacity cartridge.

Sometimes, the answer is as simple as shortening the replacement interval to match your actual water conditions.

How long does a reverse osmosis filter last?

If you keep pre filters fresh, maintain good pressure, and avoid overloading the system, RO membranes can last several years. In practice, I tell San Dimas clients to expect 2 to 4 years and to base the timing on performance metrics, not just a calendar. Watching TDS reduction with a simple meter tells you more than a date on a sticker.

How do I reset my water filtration system?

Many systems have no electronic reset at all, just mechanical valves. Resetting is mostly about opening the right valves in the right order and flushing the system after maintenance. Some newer units with digital heads or filter life indicators may have specific button sequences, so the owner's manual is your friend here.

When cloudy water is a sign to upgrade

Sometimes the search for "Why is my filtered water cloudy?" uncovers a more basic limitation. The system does not truly match the water you have or the performance you expect.

If you have very hard water in San Dimas, but only a simple under sink carbon filter, that system will never fix your scale or cloudiness issues. At best, it will make the water taste better. If you want spot free dishes and soft skin, the better question becomes "What is the best water filtration system for hard water?" rather than "Why is this little filter not behaving?"

For many homes, a layered approach works best:

A properly sized softener or whole house conditioner to handle hardness and protect plumbing and appliances.

A dedicated drinking water system at the kitchen sink, usually RO or high grade carbon, to remove residual contaminants and polish taste.

A sediment pre filter where the main line enters, especially if your area has recurring construction or visible particulates in the water.

Cloudy filtered water can be the symptom that pushes you to re evaluate. Instead of endlessly fixing a marginal or aging system, it can be smarter to invest in technology that matches local San Dimas water quality and your household's usage.

When that new system is installed, keep the simple disciplines: change filters on time, check for leaks after service, occasionally look inside housings for signs of slime or media breakdown, and pay attention to taste and flow changes. Those small habits prevent most of the headaches that lead people to worry about what they are actually drinking.

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