Facts and Filters

Activated Carbon Filters

An activated carbon filter (most popular pitcher/faucet filters are activated carbon) can improve taste, odor, and color problems associated with organic chemicals in the water. It is particularly effective at reducing the taste and odor associated with chlorine, an additive used by water agencies to protect tap water from biological contaminants. This type of filter does not remove hardness minerals, sodium, microbes, nitrates or fluoride.

An activated carbon filter works by attracting and holding certain chemicals as water passes through it.The effectiveness of this process depends on a variety of factors, including temperature, pH, and the flow rate of water through the filter.

There are several types of activated carbon filters available for household use. They include carafe-style units, faucet-mounted filters and under-sink models. Activated carbon filters may also be installed along the water line leading to icemakers and refrigerator water dispensers. The activated carbon within the filter holders may be granular, powdered, or in a solid block. *(continued on back)*

- Properly maintaining equipment is essential because inadequately maintained filters can actually reduce water quality.
- All filtering systems are different. It's important to make sure the device you choose addresses your particular concern.
- Questions regarding specific devices, as well as specific guidelines for maintenance, should be directed to the manufacturer.
- Individuals with specific concerns about medical conditions should discuss options with their doctor.

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Over time, an AC filter loses its ability to remove contaminants, because it is holding all the material it can. Most manufacturers recommend a filter change after a specific volume of water has passed through the filter. A general guideline is to change the filter after six months of use or 1,000 gallons of filtered water.

Activated carbon filtration should only be used on water that has been tested and found to be bacteria free or effectively treated for pathogenic bacteria. Public water systems treat for disease-causing bacteria; therefore, the likelihood of disease-causing bacteria being introduced to an activated carbon filter from public drinking water is remote.

However, bacteria that do not cause diseases can grow in AC filters. While consuming these bacteria poses little risk to healthy people, people with special medical conditions should check with their doctor before deciding on a supplemental treatment system.