

Think before you drink.

What you should know about backflow

What if you turned on your faucet to get a drink and along with the water, out came some tiny worms? Or smelly green slime? Or yellow goo? Or brown foam?

Would you still drink it?

The water that comes out of the faucet or a drinking fountain is clean and safe to drink. Bad stuff that is sucked in or pushes into the pipes that deliver water to your home and school is called backflow.

What causes this?

The water in the pipes flows in one direction-toward the faucets-because of pressure. The water from your utility is pumped into water tanks and towers that rise high above the pipes. The tanks and towers then fill the pipes by gravity. When the tanks, towers and pipes are full, the water pressure is high and keeps water flowing in one direction toward homes and schools. But if the water pressure is suddenly lost-maybe from a pipe breaking or water flowing from a hydrant for firefighting-a vacuum may be formed. This situation can allow something to be sucked up into the water pipes from another direction. It's like the vacuum you create when drinking water or soda through a straw.

Think about it.

Water can flow through a hose in both directions. Imagine leaving a hose end in a swimming pool or a bucket of soapy water used for washing your dog. The other end of the hose is connected to an outside faucet. If the water pressure in the supply pipes drops, the swimming pool water or the soapy water from the bucket could be sucked into the household plumbing and into your drinking water. Not only can this happen in a water hose, it can happen in any type of plumbing system. The places where you go to eat, your school, and businesses have mechanical backflow preventers that protect the plumbing systems from backflow.

Make your water safe at home.

Ask your parents to put a small device called a *hose bib* on any faucet that connects to a hose to stop backflow. Keep the ends of hoses out of buckets, pools, and other places where something could be sucked up into the water supply. Always keep the end of the hose at least two inches above any container. This is called an *air gap*. You should always be able to watch the water come out of a hose. If the water from the faucet or drinking fountain looks or smells funny, don't drink it. Tell an adult to contact your water utility.

Let's work together to keep water healthy and safe.