

What is scum?

Scum is a thin layer of dirt, waste, or impurities that forms on the surface of a liquid, especially on water. For example, you might see a layer of scum on the surface of a glass of water, or on a stagnant pond. Research has shown that scum is composed primarily of calcium carbonate and a mixture of complex chemicals and minerals.

High water temperatures in hard water areas is a key facilitator in the build-up of scum. This is closely related to the formation of hard water scale, a byproduct of boiling mineral rich water.

To find out more about scale, check out the other issues on our technical hub.



How does it effect drinking?

Scum in drinking water, while not always harmful, can affect the drinking experience and potentially indicate underlying issues with water quality.

The presence of scum can negatively alter the taste and smell of water, making it less pleasant to drink. Scum caused by mineral deposits or organic matter may impart a metallic, earthy, or stale taste to the water.

Drinking scum infested water can also pose potential health concerns, which is why it is important to identify, remove, and prevent scum build up in your machines. In extreme cases, consuming scum can lead to infections, gastrointestinal issues, or mild allergic reactions.



Combatting scum

While not all forms of scum are harmful, it can be an indication of contamination, particularly if it results from bacterial or algal growth. Drinking water that has visible scum, especially if the source is uncertain, should be avoided.

Thankfully, there are clear measures you can take when it comes to preventing scum.

- **Use Filtered Water:** Using water filters to remove impurities can help reduce mineral content and potential contaminants.
- **Clean Machines Properly:** Ensure that your coolers / dispensing machines are thoroughly rinsed after washing to avoid any descaler or sanitising solution residue.
- **Regularly Replace Filters:** Don't leave filters in your machines for extended periods of time. If bacteria grows in a filter it will continuously shed contaminants into your machine. This is the main reason why the EDWCA (European Drinking Water Cooler Association) demand that water cooler filters are replaced every six months.

If you consistently notice scum in your drinking water, it might be a good idea to check the quality of your water source or have your water tested to ensure it's safe to drink.