

**What is the pink film on my fixtures and other surfaces?**

A pink film or residue on bathroom and kitchen surfaces generally does not indicate a problem with the water quality. In fact, the pink residue is likely a result of airborne bacteria present in the home that produce a pinkish or dark gray film on surfaces that are routinely moist, such as toilet bowls, showerheads, sink drains, and tiles. Some people have reported that the pink residue appears in their pet's water bowl and fortunately it has not caused harm to the pet and is easily cleaned off. Many experts agree that the bacteria that causes this pink film is most like *Serratia marcescens*, a bacteria which is found naturally in soil, food, and in animals, *Serratia*, which produce a characteristic red pigment, thrive on moisture, dust, and phosphates and need almost nothing to survive. Generally thought to be harmless, recently *Serratia marcescens* has been tied to urinary tract infections, wound infections, and pneumonia in some people.

**When does the pink residue occur on fixtures and other surfaces?**

The pinkish film often appears during or after construction or remodeling, when dust and dirt containing *Serratia* bacteria are stirred up. Once the bacteria are airborne, they will seek a moist location where it can proliferate. Some people have reported that the pink residue only appears during certain times of the year, especially when their windows are left open for most of the day. This type of bacteria is present in a number of environments and wind can carry the airborne bacteria or stir up dust in which the bacteria are present. The appearance of the pink residue can be intensified by the use of activated carbon filters, which remove chlorine from the water. The absence of the normal levels of chlorine in tap water allows *Serratia* to thrive. Because chlorine naturally dissipates from water that is allowed to collect on surfaces, *Serratia* may proliferate in these areas.

**How do I get rid of the pink film on fixtures and other surfaces?**

The best solution to this problem is to continually clean the involved surfaces to keep them free from bacteria. Chlorine-based compounds work best, but keep in mind that abrasive cleaners may scratch fixtures, making them more susceptible to bacterial growth. Chlorine bleach can be used periodically to disinfect the toilet and help to eliminate the occurrence of the pink residue. By keeping bathtubs and sinks wiped down and dry, the formation of pink residue can be avoided. Cleaning these surfaces with a solution that contains chlorine will also help to minimize the occurrence of pink residue.

If you have any questions concerning your water quality, call the Town of Hillsborough Water Plant at 919-732-3621.