



What is that "pink stuff" in my bathroom?

Pink residue is less likely a problem associated with water quality than with naturally occurring airborne bacteria, and is also affected by the homeowner's cleaning habits. The bacteria produces a pinkish film, and sometimes a dark gray film, on surfaces that are regularly moist, including toilet bowls, shower heads, sink drains, and tiles.

Although the exact species of bacteria is not known, most experts have concluded that this pink staining is most likely from the bacteria *Serratia marcescens*. These bacteria thrive on moisture, dust and phosphates and are widely distributed, having been found naturally in soil, food, and also in animals.

Many times, the pinkish film appears during and after new construction or remodeling activities. Once airborne, the bacteria seek moist environments to proliferate. Some people have even noted the pink residue in their pet's water bowl, which causes no apparent harm and can be easily cleaned off. Others have indicated that their experience with this nuisance occurs during a time of year that their windows are open for the majority of the day. These airborne bacteria can come from any number of naturally occurring sources and the condition can be further aggravated if customers remove the chlorine from their water by way of an activated carbon filter.

What To Do: The best solution to keep these surfaces free from the bacterial film is continual cleaning. A chlorinous compound is best, but use care with abrasives to avoid scratching the fixtures, which will make them even more susceptible to bacteria. Chlorine bleach can be periodically stirred into the toilet tank and flushed into the bowl itself. As the tank refills, more bleach can be added. A toilet cake that contains a disinfectant can keep a residual in the water at all times. The porous walls of a toilet tank can harbor many opportunistic organisms.

Call the Bessemer City Public Works Water Department for additional assistance (704) 629-5684.