Ask three San Dimas homeowners if they drink from the tap and you will usually get three different answers. One trusts it completely, one only uses it for coffee and cooking, and one hauls cases of bottled water into the garage every week.

They cannot all be right, but they can all be reasonable. Whether your water feels “safe” depends not only on regulations, but on what is actually in your local supply, how sensitive you are to taste and odor, and how well your home plumbing and filtration are set up.

I work with water in the San Gabriel Valley, including San Dimas, often enough to see the same patterns repeat: hard water scale on fixtures, chlorine smell from the tap, fouled reverse osmosis systems under the sink, and people confused about whether they should repair or replace aging filters.

Let’s sort out what San Dimas water is, how safe it is, and how to choose and maintain a filtration system that actually works in your house.

Who provides water in San Dimas?

San Dimas is not served by a single unified water utility. Most residents fall into one of a few service areas:

Golden State Water Company serves a large portion of the city as a private retail water supplier. Some areas are served by the City of San Dimas Water Division or nearby municipal systems. A handful of mutual water companies and irrigation companies cover scattered pockets.

If you want to know exactly who provides water at your address, the fastest way is to look at your water bill or search your address on your city’s website.

Behind those local names sits a shared regional backbone. Much of the treated water in San Dimas is imported through the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the Three Valleys Municipal Water District. It comes from two primary imported sources, backed up by local groundwater:

- The State Water Project, which delivers water originating in Northern and Central California.
- The Colorado River Aqueduct, which brings in Colorado River water.
- Local groundwater from the Main San Gabriel Basin and nearby groundwater basins.

Suppliers blend these sources in different proportions depending on the time of year, drought conditions, and system operations. That is one reason your water can taste a little different from one season to the next, even if you never change anything in your home.

Is San Dimas water safe to drink?

From a regulatory standpoint, the short answer is yes. Utilities that serve San Dimas must comply with federal Safe Drinking Water Act standards enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency, and with additional rules enforced by the California State Water Resources Control Board.

Every year or two, they publish Consumer Confidence Reports (also called water quality reports) that summarize test results for regulated contaminants. In the reports I have seen for San Dimas area systems, the water meets or is better than the legal limits for the list of regulated contaminants.

That “meets standards” statement is important, but it is not the whole story.

First, legal limits are policy decisions as much as scientific absolutes. For some contaminants, especially emerging chemicals like PFAS, allowable limits have been tightened in recent years as more health data became available. What was considered acceptable a decade ago may no longer be considered protective today.

Second, regulations draw a hard line between “below the limit” and “above the limit”. Your personal comfort level might not fall at exactly the same place. Some people choose additional home filtration for peace of mind, especially if they are pregnant, have infants at home, or have specific health concerns.

Third, “safe” in the regulatory sense does not cover taste, smell, or hardness. I rarely meet anyone in San Dimas who is thrilled with the taste of unfiltered tap water. The most common complaints are chlorine odor, a slightly “mineral” taste, and visible scale on fixtures and dishes.

From my vantage point, here is the practical view:

- If you are asking “Is San Dimas water safe to drink at all?” the answer is yes, it is treated and tested and generally safe for healthy adults.
- If you are asking “Is San Dimas water as pure and clean as I can reasonably make it?” then you are talking about adding a properly designed home filtration or softening system, not about abandoning tap water entirely.

What is in San Dimas tap water?

Each supplier publishes its own numbers, but you tend to see the same general pattern throughout the area.

Chlorine and disinfection byproducts

Like almost every municipal supply in Southern California, San Dimas water is disinfected with chlorine or chloramine. Without disinfection, you would have far bigger problems than a swimming pool odor, but the tradeoff is taste, smell, and the formation of disinfection byproducts such as trihalomethanes and haloacetic acids.

For most systems serving San Dimas, these byproducts test below the maximum contaminant levels, but some people still prefer to reduce them further at the point of use. A good carbon filter is very effective at removing chlorine and significantly reducing most of these byproducts.

Hardness and minerals

San Dimas has hard water. Depending on the season and blend of imported versus groundwater, hardness often lands in the “hard” to “very hard” range. In practical terms, here is what that means in a typical home:

Soap does not lather as easily. You use more detergent in the washing machine and more soap in the shower.

White spots and film appear on glasses out of the dishwasher.

Scale builds up in shower heads, faucets, and inside water heaters.

The hardness comes from dissolved calcium and magnesium. These are not a health concern for most people. They are an annoyance and a maintenance issue.

Total dissolved solids (TDS)

With Colorado River water and local groundwater in the mix, total dissolved solids are relatively high. Many homeowners who install reverse osmosis systems under the sink are reacting less to a single scary contaminant and more to the general “mineral” character of the water, which comes from TDS.

A TDS meter reading in the 400 to 700 parts per million range is not unusual in the region, though specific numbers vary by system and season.

Other contaminants

The detailed water quality reports for the area list many other parameters:

- Metals such as lead and copper, typically at very low levels in the supply itself, but they can leach from home plumbing.
- Nitrate and nitrite, especially in groundwater influenced by agriculture or septic systems.
- Volatile organic compounds, herbicides, and pesticides, usually at non-detect or very low levels.

PFAS (the “forever chemicals”) are an evolving issue throughout Southern California. Some wells have been taken offline or are receiving additional treatment. Utilities that detect PFAS must report them, and California has been tightening guidelines and maximum contaminant levels. If PFAS is a concern for you, read your system’s most recent report closely and consider filtration options that specifically address PFAS, such as high quality activated carbon and certain reverse osmosis membranes.

Does San Dimas have hard water?

Yes. From a homeowner’s perspective, San Dimas water is solidly hard.

If you have lived with soft water before and just moved into the area, you will notice the difference almost immediately. You might see:

- A stubborn ring in the toilet bowl no matter how often you clean.
- White crust on shower doors, faucets, and at the base of the kitchen faucet spout.
- Water heater elements or tank showing a heavy scale layer during service.

Hardness does not mean your water is unsafe, but it does shorten the life of fixtures and appliances. It also affects water filtration equipment. Pre filters and reverse osmosis membranes foul faster in hard water. If your water is still hard after filtration, it usually means you have a filter but not a softener, or you have a softener that is not working properly or not sized correctly.

If you are choosing a system, the best water filtration system for hard water in San Dimas is usually a combination: a whole house sediment and carbon filter to remove chlorine and particulates, paired with a salt based water softener or a properly designed scale reduction system. For drinking water, a reverse osmosis system under the sink adds an extra polishing step.

What is a water filtration system, really?

People use “filter” for everything from a simple refrigerator cartridge to a full treatment plant. At the home level, a water filtration system is any device or combination of devices installed to remove, reduce, or alter substances in your water before you use it.

A few common categories in San Dimas homes:

Under sink filters, typically carbon cartridges or small under sink reverse osmosis systems feeding a dedicated drinking water faucet.

Whole house filters, usually large canisters that treat water at the point where it enters the home, often a sediment pre filter plus a carbon filter.

Reverse osmosis (RO) systems, most often under the kitchen sink, sometimes whole house for specific water quality needs.

Water softeners, which technically are not filters, but ion exchange systems that swap hardness minerals for sodium or potassium to reduce scale.

Multi stage systems that combine two or more of the above, such as a whole house carbon filter plus a softener, plus an under sink RO for drinking.

When people ask, “How does a water filtration system work?” they are usually expecting a simple answer like “The filter catches bad things and lets good water through.” In real systems, each stage targets a specific water quality issue:

Sediment cartridges capture sand, rust, and other particles that would plug fixtures and foul finer filters.

Activated carbon absorbs chlorine, many organic chemicals, and improves taste and odor.

Ion exchange resins remove specific ions such as calcium, magnesium, or nitrate.

Reverse osmosis membranes reject a wide range of dissolved solids at the molecular level.

Ultraviolet (UV) light units disinfect by damaging microorganisms’ DNA, without chemicals.

The best setup for you depends on what you are trying to fix: hardness, chlorine taste, specific contaminants, or all of the above.

How much does a water filtration system cost in San Dimas?

Costs vary widely, but after enough kitchen table quotes and repair calls, typical ranges emerge.

A basic under sink carbon filter can be as little as a hundred dollars for hardware, installed by a handy homeowner in an afternoon. An under sink reverse osmosis system, professionally installed, usually sits in the 400 to 900 dollar range, depending on the brand and how complicated the plumbing under your sink is.

Whole house systems cost more. A simple whole house sediment and carbon filter for a typical three bedroom home often runs from 1,000 to 2,500 dollars installed. Adding a salt based water softener or a more advanced scale reduction system can push the total to 3,000 to 5,000 dollars or more, especially if you need electrical work, a new drain connection, or a concrete pad outside.

Those are ballpark numbers. If someone quotes far below that for a full whole house system, ask a lot of questions about the quality of the tanks, valves, and media. If someone quotes far above it, they might be selling you a complex, branded “water conditioning package” with bells and whistles you do not need.

How long do water filtration systems last?

With reasonable maintenance, many systems last 7 to 15 years. The disposable parts are the filters and membranes; the valves and tanks are the long term pieces.

Sediment and carbon filter cartridges are consumables. How often should water filters be replaced? That depends on the type and your water use, but a common pattern in San Dimas homes is:

Sediment pre filters every 3 to 6 months, sometimes more often if your water has a lot of fine particles.

Carbon cartridges every 6 to 12 months, depending on size and chlorine load.

Reverse osmosis pre filters every 6 to 12 months, membranes every 2 to 5 years, again depending on usage and water quality.

Softener resin beds can last 7 to 15 years if they are not heavily fouled by iron or other problem contaminants. Control valves may need rebuilding or replacement in a similar timeframe.

A system that was cheap to begin with, never serviced, and pushed far past its rated capacity will fail sooner. A system with quality components, installed correctly and serviced on a sensible schedule, often keeps going well beyond a decade.

How often should a water filtration system be serviced?

You can think in layers.

At the basic level, you replace cartridges and salt before the system starves. For most residential setups:

- Cartridges checked every 3 to 6 months at least once visually or with a pressure drop test.
- Softener salt checked monthly and kept at the manufacturer’s recommended level.

At the deeper level, a full service should cover more than “swap the filters”. Once a year is a good starting point for most San Dimas homes with whole house systems. A thorough service should include:

Checking and recording inlet and outlet pressures.

Inspecting for leaks, corrosion, and signs of bypassed or cross connected plumbing.

Testing hardness, chlorine, and TDS before and after treatment to verify performance.

Sanitizing housings and, for RO, the storage tank if needed.

Verifying programming on softener or backwashing filter control heads.

If you are on well water or have known contaminants beyond hardness and chlorine, semiannual visits might be appropriate.

When should I replace my water filtration system?

At some point, tank, valves, and plumbing age out. It is a judgment call, but I look at a few clear signs.

If the system is over 10 to 15 years old and key parts are obsolete or no longer supported, it may be better to replace than to keep nursing it along.

If the control valve or manifold is cracked, leaking heavily, or was a low quality model to begin with, it may not be worth a major rebuild.

If repeated repairs still leave you with poor water quality, low pressure, or constant nuisance problems, you are throwing good money after bad.

This ties directly into “Is it cheaper to repair or replace a water filtration system?” Often, if the repair cost approaches 40 to 50 percent of a comparable new system, and the old system is more than halfway through a normal life span, replacement makes financial sense. The exception is a high end commercial grade system that was well designed from the start; those often justify valve rebuilds or resin replacement because the core is solid.

Is it worth repairing a water filtration system?

For many San Dimas homeowners, yes, especially for mid range under sink and whole house systems that are under 10 years old.

Here is how I think about “Is it worth repairing a water filtration system?” in practice:

If the issue is a worn O ring, a leaking housing, a stuck bypass, or a clogged cartridge, repair is usually inexpensive and very worthwhile.

If a reverse osmosis system is not producing water and the cause is a fouled membrane or a bad automatic shutoff valve, replacing parts is often far cheaper than a whole new unit.

If your water softener is not working with your filter because of a misprogrammed valve, drained brine tank, or plugged injector, a technician can usually bring it back to life without a major overhaul.

Where repairs stop making sense is when multiple large components fail at once on an old, low quality system, or when a proprietary brand makes parts artificially expensive.

Shower Valve Repair

Common water filter problems in San Dimas homes

Most of the homeowner questions I hear fit into a set of repeatable categories. The underlying principles do not change much from one brand to another.

Why is my water filtration system not working at all?

If no treated water is coming through, start with simple checks.

Make sure the system is not in bypass. Many whole house filters and softeners have a bypass lever or pair of valves that let the water go around the system. If someone recently did plumbing work, they may have left it in bypass.

Look for shutoff valves that were closed and not reopened.

Check filters for clogging. If a sediment filter is long overdue, it can plug completely and choke off flow.

If you have a reverse osmosis system and the faucet suddenly went dry, the storage tank might be empty because the system shut down due to a closed feed valve, a failed automatic shutoff, or a clogged prefilter.

Why is no water coming out of my water filter?

This question usually relates to an under sink filter or refrigerator filter. Apart from the issues above, I often see:

Cartridges installed backward or with missing internal flow restrictors.

An airlock in the line after a cartridge change, which clears with time or flushing.

A filter that was replaced with a finer micron rating than the old one, choking flow because the plumbing was marginal to begin with.

If you just changed a cartridge and suddenly no water is coming out, go back and check that the cartridge is fully seated, that any O rings are in place and lightly lubricated, and that the valves are open.

Why is my reverse osmosis system not producing water?

Reverse osmosis likes pressure and hates clogs. In San Dimas, where TDS and hardness are both high, RO systems work hard.

If your RO system is not producing water or is painfully slow, the main culprits tend to be:

A clogged sediment or carbon prefilter starving the membrane.

A fouled membrane that no longer passes water at a reasonable rate.

Low feed water pressure, especially if you have a pressure regulator set too low or your home is on the end of a long run.

A failed automatic shutoff valve or check valve.

Most under sink RO systems give 2 to 5 years of reasonable performance before the membrane needs to be changed, assuming prefilters are replaced on schedule. In hard water areas, membranes on neglected systems can scale up much sooner.

Why is my water filter leaking?

Leaks usually come from simple mechanical issues:

O rings that were pinched, twisted, or left out during a cartridge change.

Housings that were over tightened and cracked, or under tightened and left loose.

Tubing connections that were not fully inserted into push fit fittings.

Freezing damage. Yes, a water filter system can freeze and break. If you have outdoor filter housings and a cold snap hits, the water inside can expand and crack plastic housings or fittings. In our climate, it is less common than in colder states, but I still see outdoor filters split open after unusual cold nights.

If you need to find a leak in your water filtration system, dry everything off, wrap suspect joints with dry paper towels, and turn the water on slowly while watching closely. The first damp towel usually marks the leak.

What causes low water pressure after a water filter?

Filters resist flow as they clog. If your whole house pressure dropped right after a filter change, the new filter may have a much finer micron rating or a different internal design. If the pressure drops gradually over weeks or months, the filter is slowly loading up with sediment and needs replacement.

Low pressure can also happen when a system is undersized. A small single cartridge filter housing installed on the main line of a five bathroom house will struggle at peak use, even with a brand new cartridge. In those cases, the fix is to upgrade to larger housings or multiple filters in parallel.

If you wonder how to increase water pressure on your filtration system, start with sizing and cartridge choice before reaching for a booster pump.

Why is my water filtration system slow?

For under sink systems, “slow” usually means the faucet just trickles. The causes mirror low pressure after a whole house filter: clogged cartridges, a tired RO membrane, low feed pressure, or undersized tubing.

When a system that used to be fast becomes slow, something has changed. Look at: new cartridges that are too restrictive, an old membrane that needs replacement, or sediment build up somewhere in the line.

Why is my filtered water cloudy?

Cloudiness in freshly filtered water can be either trapped air or fine particles.

Trapped air shows up as milky water that clears from the bottom up in a glass over a minute or two. This often happens after a new filter is installed or air gets pulled into the line. It is not usually a problem.

If your filtered water is cloudy and leaves fine grit at the bottom of a glass, then a sediment filter is either missing, bypassed, or broken down internally. A cartridge that has collapsed or a cracked internal core can release media into the line.

Why does my filtered water taste bad?

A properly functioning filter should improve taste, not worsen it. Bad taste from a filter usually means:

The carbon or other media is exhausted and overdue for replacement.

The system sat unused for a long time, allowing water to stagnate in the cartridges and tank.

Bacterial growth in a neglected RO storage tank.

If filtered water tastes bad, change the cartridges, sanitize the housings, and in the case of RO systems, consider sanitizing or replacing the tank if it is older.

If your water filter is not removing chlorine, either the carbon is exhausted, the flow rate is too high for the filter size, or the plumbing is partially bypassing the filter.

Why is my water still hard after filtration?

Most standard “filters” do not soften water. They remove sediment and chlorine, not calcium and magnesium. If you expected softer water but only installed a carbon filter, hardness will not change.

If you do have a softener and the water is still hard, common issues are:

The softener ran out of salt or is bridged with salt that looks full but does not dissolve.

The control head is misprogrammed or stuck in bypass.

The resin bed is fouled by iron or other contaminants and no longer exchanges effectively.

A hardness test before and after the softener will tell you quickly whether the unit is working. In San Dimas, if a softener is functioning, hardness after the unit should be close to zero grains per gallon.

Why is my water filter making a noise?

Strange sounds often trace back to air or rapid flow changes. Gurgling from an RO drain line is normal as reject water flows. Hammering or banging sometimes points to a loose pipe or a valve closing too quickly.

If a new filter starts whistling or hissing, you may have installed a cartridge that is too restrictive, creating high velocity through small openings. Occasionally, a manufacturing defect in a cartridge produces internal noise as water jets through a gap.

Why does my water filter keep clogging?

In some parts of San Dimas, older galvanized service lines or high sediment loads cause filters to clog fast. If you find your sediment filter turning brown or black within a month, you may need a multi stage approach: a coarse filter first, then a finer one, to spread the load.

Undersized filters clog faster. Upgrading from small 10 inch housings to larger 20 inch housings, or to a backwashing sediment filter, drastically improves the maintenance interval.

How do I know if my water filter is bad?

You cannot always tell by looking at it. A sediment filter that is dark brown is obviously loaded, but carbon filters often look clean on the outside even when they are exhausted.

More reliable signs include:

Taste and odor coming back. If chlorine smell returns, your carbon is likely done.

Pressure drop across the filter. If your home pressure was fine with a new filter and is now low, the cartridge is clogging.

Manufacturer rated capacity met or exceeded. If a filter is rated for 10,000 gallons and you use 400 gallons a day, you will cross that capacity in about 25 days. Life claims are always approximate, but extremely overdue filters almost always perform poorly, even if taste seems okay.

For critical applications, inexpensive chlorine test strips and hardness test kits give a more objective reading of whether a filter or softener is still doing its job.

Can I repair my water filtration system myself, or do I need a plumber?

Many homeowners in San Dimas handle simple maintenance themselves. Cartridge changes, brine tank cleaning, and RO prefilter replacement are manageable for people comfortable with basic tools and getting a bit wet.

You can usually change a water filter cartridge yourself as long as you follow the manufacturer's instructions, shut off the water, depressurize the system, and pay attention to O rings and tightening. Most refrigerator filters are designed deliberately for homeowner replacement.

Where I recommend a professional plumber or water treatment specialist:

If you are dealing with leaks inside walls or ceilings, not just at exposed fittings.

If your softener or whole house filter control valve needs rebuild or reprogramming beyond simple menu settings.

If you need to cut, solder, or glue into copper, galvanized, or PVC main lines, especially in tight spaces.

If your reverse osmosis system has multiple simultaneous issues and you are not comfortable tracing pressures and flows with a gauge.

Who repairs water filtration systems? In practice, both licensed plumbers and specialized water treatment companies do. Plumbers are ideal when plumbing modifications are needed. Water treatment specialists often know proprietary valves, programming, and media choices in more depth. For larger jobs, a combination of the two is common.

How do you fix typical home filtration setups?

Each type of system has its own rhythm.

To fix a whole house water filter that has poor flow or obvious clogging, I usually:

Shut off inlet water and relieve pressure.

Open the housing carefully, remove the cartridge, and inspect for collapse or obvious blockage.

Clean the housing, check and lubricate O rings, and install a new cartridge of the correct micron rating.

Check inlet and outlet pressures after restarting to confirm improvement.

If the whole house filter has visible leaks, the fix might be as simple as replacing flattened O rings or as involved as replacing a cracked housing, often caused by overtightening or freezing.

For an under sink water filter, repairs often involve:

Checking all compression or push fit connections.

Verifying cartridge orientation and seating.

Flushing the system thoroughly after any change to clear air and carbon fines.

Reverse osmosis system repairs are more diagnostic. To repair a reverse osmosis system that is not producing enough water or appears dead, I move through a series of tests:

Feed pressure and prefilter condition.

Membrane condition and age.

Operation of the automatic shutoff valve, check valve, and flow restrictor.

Condition of the storage tank air charge.

A tank that is waterlogged or with incorrect air pressure will dramatically affect flow.

How do you change a water filter cartridge?

Since this is one of the most common homeowner tasks in San Dimas, here are the core steps that apply to most standard housings on under sink and whole house systems:

1. Turn off the water supply to the filter, then open a nearby faucet to relieve pressure so you are not fighting a pressurized housing.
2. Use the filter wrench or your hand to unscrew the housing, catching any water in a pan or towel, then remove the used cartridge and discard it.
3. Rinse the housing, check and clean the O ring groove, lightly lubricate the O ring with food grade silicone, and place the new cartridge into the housing in the correct orientation.
4. Screw the housing back on hand tight plus a small extra turn with the wrench, then slowly turn the water supply back on while checking for leaks.
5. Flush the new cartridge according to instructions, often a few minutes of running water, to clear air and any loose carbon fines before normal use.

If a housing is stuck, avoid using pipe wrenches or over force that can crack it. Sometimes putting gentle pressure with the correct filter wrench while tapping the housing with the heel of your hand helps break the seal. When a housing simply will not budge, I sometimes have to cut it out and replace it. That is the stage where many homeowners sensibly decide to call a pro.

What maintenance does a water filtration system need in San Dimas?

Beyond cartridge changes and occasional tank sanitizing, San Dimas conditions suggest a few extra points.

Because hardness and TDS are high, pay close attention to prefilter schedules. Letting sediment and chlorine hit your RO membrane or softener resin unchecked shortens their life.

Hard water scale can build up in drain lines and brine injectors. Having those checked and cleaned during annual service prevents mysterious softener failures.

If your system lives outdoors, keep housings shaded and insulated as needed to protect from heat and the rare but real freezing nights. UV light can embrittle plastic housings over time, making them more prone to cracking.

Finally, build a simple log. Write on the side of each housing with a permanent marker when you changed the filter and what micron rating or part number it was. It seems small, but it prevents a lot of “When did we last change that?” guessing later, and it helps any plumber or technician who comes after you.

Putting it together for a San Dimas home

San Dimas water is safe by regulatory standards, but it is also hard, chlorinated, and mineral rich. For many households, the right approach is not to fear the tap, but to tame it.

For some, a well maintained under sink filter for drinking water and ice, plus a whole house sediment and carbon filter, is enough. For others, adding a water softener to control scale and a reverse osmosis system for very low TDS drinking water justifies the extra cost and maintenance.

Whatever level you choose, the system only protects you as long as it works. Most of the headaches I see in local homes trace back to neglected filters, undersized components, or DIY modifications that ignored flow and

pressure.

If you take anything from this, let it be this: check your local water quality report, decide what matters most to you (taste, hardness, specific contaminants), choose equipment designed for San Dimas conditions, and treat maintenance as part of normal home care, not as an afterthought.

Do that, and your tap can go from a question mark to a reliable, predictable part of your daily life.

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