

Most homeowners in San Dimas do not think much about their water filtration system until something tastes off, a filter housing starts to leak, or the reverse osmosis faucet slows to a trickle. By the time you notice a clear sign of trouble, the system has usually been struggling for a while.

I work in homes where people are genuinely surprised to learn how badly their filters have degraded. They remember the installation, but not the last service. Cartridges are years past due, O-rings are brittle, and the water no longer tastes any better than straight tap.

This guide walks through how to recognize the signs of a bad water filtration system, with specific context for San Dimas water quality, common system types, and the practical question every homeowner asks: repair or replace?

A Quick Look at San Dimas Water

Before talking about filtration problems, it helps to understand the water you are starting with.

San Dimas is in eastern Los Angeles County, and water service is provided mainly by Golden State Water Company and Covina Irrigating Company, with imported supplies through Three Valleys Municipal Water District plus local groundwater. The blends vary by neighborhood and by season, so your tap water might not be exactly the same as your neighbor's across town.

San Dimas water is generally considered safe to drink by regulatory standards. It is treated, disinfected, and tested under state and federal rules. That said, safe by regulation does not always mean pleasant to drink. Residents commonly notice:

- Hard water from calcium and magnesium that leaves spots and scale.
- Chlorine or chloramine used for disinfection, which can affect taste and odor.
- Occasional cloudiness from air bubbles, especially after repairs or changes in the system.

That mix is why so many homes add some kind of water filtration system or softener. When you know what is in San Dimas tap water, you can also better spot when your system stops doing its job.

What Is a Water Filtration System, Really?

People use "water filter" to describe anything from a refrigerator cartridge to a full treatment plant in their garage. At the residential level, a water filtration system is any device or combination of devices installed to remove or reduce contaminants or improve water quality.

Common systems in San Dimas homes include:

Whole house filters, usually installed near the main shutoff, to remove sediment, chlorine, and sometimes specific contaminants from all water entering the home.

Under sink filters, often installed at the kitchen sink, to treat drinking and cooking water.

Reverse osmosis (RO) systems, usually under the sink, that push water through a semi-permeable membrane for very fine filtration.

Water softeners, which swap calcium and magnesium ions for sodium or potassium to reduce hardness. A softener is not a filter in the strict sense, but it is often tied into the same plumbing and problems can overlap.

In practical terms, when you ask “What is a water filtration system?” in your house, you are talking about the setup of housings, cartridges, tanks, valves, tubing, and sometimes a separate faucet that treat your water on its way to you.

How Does a Water Filtration System Work?

Although designs vary, most filtration systems follow the same basic logic.

First, a sediment stage catches physical particles like sand, rust, and dirt. This protects both your plumbing and any finer filters downstream.

Second, a carbon or specialty media stage targets chemicals that affect taste, odor, or safety. For city water in San Dimas, that usually means chlorine or chloramine, along with some organics.

Third, in some systems, a finer membrane or specialty cartridge handles more stubborn contaminants. In a reverse osmosis system, this is the RO membrane that removes a wide range of dissolved solids.

The system relies on several quiet details to work properly: adequate pressure, intact O-rings and seals, properly sized tubing, and regular filter changes. When any of these pieces fails, problems start to show up in your glass or under your sink.

The Most Common Signs of a Bad Water Filtration System

Some warning signs are obvious, others you only notice if you pay attention. In San Dimas homes, these are the red flags that come up again and again.

Change in taste or odor

When someone asks “Why does my filtered water taste bad now?” the answer is usually that the filters are exhausted or the system is bypassed or failing.

Watch for water that suddenly tastes:

Metallic or bitter, as though you are drinking from an old garden hose.

Strongly of chlorine, similar to unfiltered city water from another tap.

Musty, earthy, or slightly “stale”, which can signal bacteria growth in neglected filters or storage tanks.

If your kitchen filter used to remove the chlorine but you now notice the same pool-like taste you get from the bathroom tap, your system is not removing chlorine effectively. A bad carbon cartridge, fouled RO membrane, or incorrect flow rate can all cause this.

Cloudy or “milky” water

People often ask “Why is my filtered water cloudy?” and assume the worst. Sometimes the explanation is simple air bubbles, especially right after new plumbing work. If you fill a clear glass and the cloudiness rises and disappears from the bottom up within a minute, that is usually air.

Longer-lasting haze can be more concerning. It may indicate fine suspended solids getting past a worn sediment filter, or scaling and particulate from a failing softener or carbon bed. When your filtration has been neglected, trapped material can break loose and give water a persistent cloudy appearance.

If your filtered water was previously crystal clear and now stays cloudy, that is a strong sign something in the system is not doing its job.

Very slow flow from the filtered faucet

Slow water is one of the most common complaints. "Why is my water filtration system slow?" or "Why is no water coming out of my water filter?" both usually trace back to either clogged filters or pressure problems.

Typical culprits include:

A clogged sediment or carbon filter cartridge, often far past its scheduled replacement date.

A reverse osmosis membrane that has reached the end of its life and will no longer pass water.

Low water pressure feeding the system, sometimes caused by a partially closed valve or a restrictive adapter.

Kinked or undersized tubing, often from a hurried or DIY installation.

When your reverse osmosis system is not producing water at all, start by listening. If you hear the system running or draining but the storage tank never fills, the membrane or flow restrictor may have failed. If there is no sound, a shutoff valve, clogged prefilter, or stuck automatic shutoff valve might be the problem.

Hard water symptoms even after treatment

San Dimas has notably hard water. If you have a softener plus filters and still ask "Why is my water still hard after filtration?" you are probably dealing with one of three issues:

The softener is out of salt or has a malfunctioning brine system, so it is not regenerating.

The system is bypassed or partially bypassed, often after plumbing work.

The hardness is higher than the original system sizing, so it is simply undersized and overwhelmed.

Standard filters do not remove hardness. If you only have cartridge filters and no softener, you can improve taste and sediment but you will still [Water Filtration Repair San Dimas alpineplumbingandrooter.com](http://WaterFiltrationRepairSanDimas.alpineplumbingandrooter.com) see scale. For truly hard water in San Dimas, the best water filtration system for hard water is normally a combination: a properly sized softener for hardness plus carbon filtration for taste and chlorine.

Leaks around housings, fittings, or the RO faucet

"Why is my water filter leaking?" is a question that should never be ignored. A small drip can turn into cabinet damage, mold, and floor repairs.

Frequent causes include:

Dry or twisted O-rings on whole house or under sink filter housings.

Housings that were over-tightened or cross-threaded during the last filter change.

Cracked plastic from sudden pressure spikes or freezing.

Loose push-fit connections on RO tubing that were never fully seated.

A water filter system can definitely freeze and break if it is installed in a garage or exterior wall with poor insulation. After a winter cold snap, I have seen whole house filter housings split from top to bottom.

If a leak started just after changing cartridges, suspect an O-ring that was not lubricated or a housing that is not seated correctly. You can usually find the leak by drying everything, then slowly pressurizing the system and

checking joint by joint.

Odd noises from the system

Most filtration systems should be quiet. When a homeowner asks “Why is my water filter making a noise?” something has changed.

Typical sounds include:

Hissing from a small pressure leak or a partially open valve.

Rapid ticking or clicking from a water hammer effect when a valve closes suddenly.

Gurgling from the RO drain line, which can be normal to a point, but becomes suspicious if it is constant and loud.

Vibrations from loose tubing rattling against cabinets or walls.

If you hear a loud, constant drain from your reverse osmosis system, it might be stuck in flush mode or the automatic shutoff valve is not closing. That not only wastes water, it also suggests the system is not producing and storing drinking water properly.

Short filter life or frequent clogging

When someone asks “Why does my water filter keep clogging?” it usually means the water feeding it has more sediment, rust, or algae than expected. This can happen if:

Your neighborhood is being fed more heavily from a particular groundwater well.

There has been recent work on the city mains or on your own plumbing.

You installed a very fine micron cartridge as your first stage, which catches everything but also clogs very quickly.

In San Dimas, I sometimes see homes near older mains pick up more rust and sediment, especially after main breaks or repairs. In those cases, you might need a staged approach: a coarser prefilter before a finer cartridge so you are not burning through expensive filters every couple of months.

Obvious age and neglect

A system can look fine from across the room yet be well past its serviceable life. If you do not remember when filters were last changed, that is itself a sign of a bad water filtration system.

Most housings and valves can last many years if kept dry and not abused. Cartridges and wearable parts do not. When you see:

Yellowed, brittle plastic housings.

Cracked or swollen filter cartridges.

A reverse osmosis tank that feels heavy but delivers only a trickle of water.

Corroded metal fittings at the well house or garage.

You are very likely overdue for serious service or even replacement.

Quick Symptom Checklist

Use this short list as a gut check the next time you fill a glass or look under the sink.

- Filtered water tastes like straight tap, or suddenly worse.
- Flow at the filtered faucet has dropped significantly.
- You see drips, damp spots, or corrosion around filter housings.
- Scale and spotting return after previously improving.
- Your system is older than you remember, and you cannot recall the last filter change.

If two or more of these match your situation, it is time to inspect the system and plan maintenance or repair.

How Often Should Water Filters and Systems Be Serviced?

“How often should water filters be replaced?” does not have a single answer, because it depends on:

The type of filter and media.

Your household water use.

The incoming water quality.

That said, there are reasonable ranges for typical San Dimas municipal water:

Sediment and carbon cartridges: usually every 6 to 12 months. Heavy water use or high sediment can push that closer to 3 to 6 months.

Reverse osmosis prefilters and postfilters: about every 12 months.

Reverse osmosis membrane: often 3 to 5 years, sometimes longer with good prefiltration and moderate use.

Whole house carbon tanks: media commonly lasts 5 to 10 years, depending on design and chlorine load.

“How long do water filtration systems last?” depends on what you mean by system. The hard components - housings, valves, brackets - can last 10 to 20 years or more if they are quality products, properly installed, and protected from sunlight and freezing. But the heart of the system is the replaceable media. Ignore that, and your system can be “bad” in practice long before anything cracks or rusts.

As a rule of thumb, a whole house or under sink system should be serviced at least annually. That answers “How often should a water filtration system be serviced?” for most owners. Some families schedule service every 6 months if they use a lot of water or are particular about taste.

Repairing vs Replacing: What Makes Sense Financially?

At some point the conversation shifts from “How do I fix this?” to “Is it cheaper to repair or replace a water filtration system?” That is not a simple math problem, but you can look at typical costs and conditions.

“How much does it cost to repair a water filtration system?” in San Dimas will vary by company, but very roughly:

Basic cartridge change with inspection: often 150 to 300 dollars for a whole house system, depending on filters and access.

Under sink filter service: usually 100 to 250 dollars, again depending on parts.

Reverse osmosis repairs, such as replacing a membrane, tank, and key valves: 200 to 500 dollars is common.

Major rebuild of an old system with multiple leaks and obsolete parts: often not worth the effort.

“How much does a water filtration system cost?” to replace is again a range:



A quality under sink drinking water filter: roughly 250 to 800 dollars installed.

A good reverse osmosis system with a tank and faucet: 500 to 1,200 dollars installed.

A whole house sediment and carbon system: 800 to several thousand dollars, depending on size, media type, and plumbing complexity.

A full softener plus filtration package: easily 2,000 to 5,000 dollars or more, depending on capacity and features.

So is it worth repairing a water filtration system? In my experience:

If the system is under 10 years old, uses standard parts, and has a solid installation, repair and upgrades usually make sense.

If the system is 15 to 20 years old, uses proprietary parts that are hard to source, has multiple leaks, or no longer fits your current water needs, replacement is often the smarter long term choice.

There is also the value of your time and peace of mind. A reliable new system, correctly sized for San Dimas hardness and chlorine levels, can save years of small aggravations.

DIY vs Hiring a Professional

A very common question is "Can I repair my water filtration system myself?" The honest answer is: sometimes.

Many homeowners can safely:

Change a water filter cartridge.

Replace O-rings in a whole house filter housing.

Sanitize an RO system and tank.

Adjust a softener's timer or salt level.

However, there are limits. Mistakes on pressurized plumbing can get expensive, fast. When deciding whether to call a pro, people also ask "Do I need a plumber for water filter repair?" and "Who repairs water filtration systems in the first place?"

In most of San Dimas, you will find two types of professionals:

Licensed plumbers who also handle filtration.

Water treatment specialists who may subcontract larger plumbing changes.

If your issue is simple - a basic under sink filter change or a refrigerator cartridge - most handy homeowners can handle it. Once you start dealing with leaks inside walls, tying into the main, reconfiguring a softener connection, or diagnosing low pressure after a water filter, a plumber or water treatment company is usually worth the cost.

How to Change a Water Filter Cartridge Safely

Even if you plan to bring in help for major work, it is reasonable to want to change basic cartridges yourself. Homeowners often ask "Can I change my water filter myself?" and "How do I change a water filter cartridge without causing a leak?"

Here is a simple, generalized sequence that applies to most whole house or under sink housings:

- Shut off water to the system and relieve pressure by opening a downstream faucet.
- Use the correct filter wrench to loosen the housing slowly, then remove it by hand.
- Remove the old cartridge, clean the housing, inspect and lubricate the O-ring, and insert the new cartridge in the correct orientation.
- Hand tighten the housing firmly, then snug with the wrench without overdoing it. Turn water back on slowly and check carefully for leaks.

If at any point you feel you need too much force, something is wrong. Which leads to another frequent question: "How do you remove a stuck water filter?" The keys are to depressurize fully, use the correct wrench, support the plumbing so you are not twisting pipes, and avoid heat or excessive leverage that could crack the housing. If the housing still refuses to budge, call a professional rather than breaking it.

Specific Problems and What They Usually Mean

Several of the questions homeowners ask show up word for word in service calls. Here are a few, with the most common diagnoses I see in San Dimas homes.

"Why is my reverse osmosis system not producing water?"

Often, the prefilters are clogged, the membrane is fouled or at end of life, the automatic shutoff valve has failed, or the tank bladder has lost pressure. Occasionally, the feed valve is simply closed. A technician will test each stage with a meter and pressure gauge.

"Why is my water filter not removing chlorine?"

Either the carbon filter is exhausted, the water is flowing too fast through it, or the system is bypassed. For city water with steady chlorine levels, a correctly sized and maintained carbon stage should remove noticeable chlorine

taste and smell. When it does not, look first at filter age and flow path.

“What causes low water pressure after a water filter?”

Clogged cartridges, undersized piping, excessive elbows and fittings, or a restrictive filter chosen without regard to your home’s demand. A whole house system must be sized with both flow and pressure in mind. If you install a very fine cartridge meant for a single faucet on the entire house, showers will suffer.

“How do you repair a reverse osmosis system?”

The process is not mysterious: test feed water and product water TDS, verify pressure, inspect and replace prefilters and postfilters, evaluate the membrane, sanitize tank and lines, and confirm all valves, flow restrictor, and check valves function properly. Sometimes a system is beyond economical repair, especially if major parts are proprietary and discontinued.

“How do you fix a whole house water filter?”

Usually by changing cartridges, inspecting O-rings and housings for wear, checking valves, and sometimes re-piping to improve flow or add pressure relief. If a whole house system is leaking, the fix may be as simple as replacing an O-ring or as involved as replacing an entire cracked manifold.

“How do you fix an under sink water filter?”

The work is in tight spaces, but the steps are familiar: shut off, depressurize, swap cartridges, check all compression or push-fit fittings, and sanitize if there is evidence of biofilm. Under sink systems often fail due to cabinet moisture and poor access. A neat, well-supported installation tends to last much longer.

System Lifespan and When to Replace

“At what point should I just replace it?” is a fair question. “When should I replace my water filtration system?” depends on three buckets of evidence:

First, function. If the system is not solving the problems that motivated you to install it - taste, hardness, staining - despite up to date maintenance, it may be the wrong tool for the job.

Second, reliability. Repeated leaks, part failures, and hard to source components justify a fresh start with a modern, standard system.

Third, safety and standards. If the system is so old it predates modern plumbing codes or uses media of unknown origin, replacement is usually wiser.

For reverse osmosis, a common marker is that the membrane has been replaced multiple times, the tank is original, and parts are brittle. At that point, installing a new RO system with current components can cost little more than a full overhaul.

For whole house and softening systems, once the tanks and valves reach 15 to 20 years and you are seeing corrosion or cracks, it is time to budget for replacement rather than sinking more into repairs.

Final Thoughts for San Dimas Homeowners

San Dimas water is generally safe, but its hardness and chlorine content push many families toward filtration and softening. When those systems work, you notice better tasting water, less scale, clearer ice, and softer laundry. When they start to fail, the signs are there if you are willing to look and taste critically.

If your filtered water suddenly tastes bad, if flow has slowed dramatically, if you see leaks around housings, or if hardness symptoms are creeping back, do not ignore it. Those are classic signs of a bad water filtration system, and they rarely improve on their own.

Thoughtful maintenance, realistic expectations about lifespan, and timely repair or replacement will keep your system doing what you installed it to do: quietly protect your family and your plumbing from the downsides of untreated tap water.

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