If you live in San Dimas, you probably already have an opinion about your tap water. Some people notice a chlorine flavor. Others complain that fixtures crust over with white scale even though they have "a filter under the sink." A few have invested in reverse osmosis and are now wondering why the system is suddenly slow or noisy.

Getting clear on how a water filtration system actually works, and what it can and cannot solve, makes it much easier to choose the right setup, maintain it, and know when something is wrong.

This guide walks through the basics in practical terms, with a focus on what San Dimas homeowners really deal with: hard water, taste and odor, and a tangle of equipment under the sink or in the garage.

What is a water filtration system, really?

A water filtration system is any setup that removes unwanted substances from your water. That might mean visible sediment, chlorine taste, hardness minerals, or specific contaminants. In a house, "water filtration system" usually refers to one of three things:

1. A point of entry system, often called a whole house water filter, installed where the water line enters your home.
2. A point of use system, such as an under sink water filter, reverse osmosis (RO) system, or a faucet / refrigerator filter that treats water at a single location.
3. A water softener, which technically does not filter in the same way, but changes the hardness of the water through ion exchange.

A key point: different systems solve different problems. The system that makes water taste great is not necessarily the one that stops spotting on your shower glass. When people ask "Why is my water still hard after filtration?" it usually means they have a taste filter, not a softener.

San Dimas tap water: what you are starting with

Before worrying about how a filtration system works, it helps to know what it is working on.

Who provides water in San Dimas?

San Dimas sits in eastern Los Angeles County, and water service is split. Many homes receive water from the City of San Dimas Water Division. Others are served by Golden State Water Company. Both rely heavily on imported water from regional wholesalers such as Three Valleys Municipal Water District, blended with local groundwater wells where available.

The sources typically include:

- Imported surface water from the State Water Project and Colorado River Aqueduct.
- Local groundwater from the San Gabriel Valley aquifer, where wells are in use.

All of those sources are treated to meet state and federal drinking water standards before they arrive at your house.

Is San Dimas water safe to drink?

From a regulatory standpoint, yes. San Dimas tap water is monitored regularly and must comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act and California's stricter standards. Utilities publish annual Consumer Confidence Reports that

list detected contaminants and levels.

That said, “safe” on paper is not the same as “pleasant to drink.” Common complaints from San Dimas homeowners include:

- Strong chlorine or “pool” taste.
- Hard water that leaves scale on fixtures and glass.
- Cloudy water for a few seconds when you first turn on the tap.
- Slightly salty or mineral aftertaste.

Those issues are usually about aesthetics and household wear, not acute health hazards. They are exactly the kinds of problems a well chosen water filtration system can address.

Does San Dimas have hard water, and what is in the tap water?

Yes, San Dimas has moderately hard to hard water. Hardness typically ranges from around 120 to more than 200 milligrams per liter as calcium carbonate, depending on the blend of imported and local groundwater at a given time. On the scale most plumbers use, that is firmly in the “hard” category.

Your tap water is likely to contain, at varying levels:

- Calcium and magnesium (hardness minerals).
- Chlorine or chloramine used for disinfection.
- Total dissolved solids (TDS) that affect taste and scaling.
- Trace amounts of metals such as copper or lead from plumbing materials, especially in older homes.
- Very low levels of regulated contaminants such as disinfection byproducts, kept below health limits by the utility.

Understanding that baseline helps you decide what you want a filter to do. If you hate water spots and crusted shower heads, hardness is your priority. If the taste drives you to bottled water, then chlorine and TDS become your focus.

How does a water filtration system work?

Although there are many types of systems, the basic idea is simple. Water flows through one or more “treatment stages,” each designed to do a specific job. Think of it as a series of gates that catch different things.

Here are the main processes you will see in residential systems, and what they actually do.

Sediment filtration: the first catch

Most systems start with a sediment filter. This is usually a pleated or spun polypropylene cartridge that looks like a tube.

Water flows through the outer surface, and physical particles are trapped in the fibers. The filter is rated in microns. A 5 micron filter catches fine sand and many particles visible to the eye. A 20 micron filter is coarser, and a 1 micron filter is very fine.

In practical terms, sediment filtration protects the rest of the system. If you skip it, carbon filters and RO membranes clog faster. Many whole house water filters in San Dimas are basically a large sediment filter housing near the main shutoff.

Typical symptoms when the sediment stage is failing or clogged:

- Low water pressure after the filter.
- A water filtration system that is slow to produce water.
- A water filter that keeps clogging, especially if you have older galvanized pipes shedding rust.

Activated carbon filtration: taste, odor, and chlorine

The most familiar stage is the activated carbon filter. Almost every drinking water system uses it. Activated carbon has an enormous internal surface area and adsorbs many chemicals as water passes over it.

In practice, carbon filters:

- Reduce chlorine and often chloramine.
- Improve taste and odor.
- Reduce many organic compounds and some disinfection byproducts.
- Help with some pesticides, solvents, and similar contaminants, depending on design.

If you find that your water filter is not removing chlorine or that your filtered water tastes bad, the carbon stage is often spent. Carbon has a finite capacity. Once saturated, it simply stops removing contaminants, even if water still flows.

Reverse osmosis: high level purification

Many San Dimas homeowners install a reverse osmosis system under the kitchen sink. It is one of the most effective point of use technologies for improving both taste and contaminant reduction.

Here is how it works in simple terms:

1. Pre filtration: water first goes through sediment and carbon filters.
2. High pressure: the system pushes water against a semi permeable RO membrane.
3. Separation: pure water molecules pass through the membrane, while most dissolved solids, salts, and many contaminants are left behind in the waste stream.
4. Storage: the purified water is collected in a small pressurized tank, usually 2 to 4 gallons capacity.
5. Polishing: when you open the faucet, water leaves the tank and often passes through a final carbon stage for taste.

If your reverse osmosis system is not producing water, or production has slowed to a trickle, there are a few usual suspects:

- The feed pressure is too low.
- Pre filters are clogged and starving the membrane.
- The storage tank bladder has lost air pressure.
- The automatic shutoff valve or flow restrictor has failed.

RO membranes do a good job of reducing TDS, many metals, and a long list of regulated contaminants. They are also sensitive. San Dimas hard water can scale an RO membrane quickly if pre treatment is poor or filters are not changed on time.

Ion exchange and water softeners: dealing with hardness

When someone in San Dimas asks “What is the best water filtration system for hard water,” they usually need a water softener, not just a filter.

A standard salt based softener uses a tank of resin beads charged with sodium or potassium ions. As hard water passes through, calcium and magnesium stick to the resin. Sodium or potassium ions are released into the water in exchange. The result is “soft” water with much lower hardness.

The system periodically regenerates using brine from the salt tank. During regeneration, the trapped calcium and magnesium are flushed to the drain and the resin is recharged.

Softening does not filter out chlorine, sediment, or most contaminants. It solves one specific issue: hardness. This is why some people say “My water softener is not working with my filter.” The two systems are doing different jobs and need to be sized and installed in the right order.

If your water is still hard after filtration, and you only have carbon or sediment filters, that is normal. Those filters do not remove dissolved minerals.

UV and specialty stages

Some whole house and point of use systems include:

- Ultraviolet (UV) lamps to disinfect bacteria and viruses in water that may not be fully treated, such as well water.
- Specialty cartridges for fluoride, arsenic, nitrates, or specific contaminants, usually in areas with known issues.

In the San Dimas area, municipal water is already disinfected, so UV is less common in city served homes, but it does show up in some high end installations or for homeowners who want an added safety layer.

How long do water filtration systems last?

There is a big difference between the lifespan of the overall system and the replaceable filters inside it.

Filter cartridges (sediment, carbon, RO pre filters) generally last:

- About 6 to 12 months for average under sink and whole house filters in a San Dimas home using municipal water.
- Three to five years for many fridge filters is optimistic; in real use they often need changing closer to every 6 to 12 months.

Reverse osmosis membranes typically last 2 to 5 years in a home with hard water that is reasonably pre filtered. If your filter maintenance is poor, membrane life can drop below 2 years.

Whole house filter housings, softener tanks, and RO manifolds can last 10 to 20 years or more if they are good quality and not abused by freezing, physical damage, or extreme pressure spikes.

The question “When should I replace my water filtration system?” usually comes up when:

- Plastic housings start to crack or leak.
- Parts are obsolete and replacement filters are hard to find.
- The system has suffered freeze damage or major internal corrosion.

Often, it is more cost effective to replace a 15 year old undersink RO system with a modern unit than to chase proprietary parts.

Recognizing a bad or failing water filtration system

You do not need lab gear to spot trouble. Most problems show up as changes in taste, pressure, or appearance.

Here are quick signs of a bad water filtration system or a filter that is past its useful life:

- A sudden return of chlorine smell or strong tap water taste from a faucet that used to taste clean.
- Noticeably lower water pressure or a weak stream at the filtered faucet, even though house pressure seems normal.
- Filtered water that looks cloudy for more than a few seconds or has visible particles.
- No water coming out of your water filter tap at all, while other faucets in the house run fine.
- A new noise at the filtration system itself, such as hissing, chattering, or the sound of water running constantly.

If your filtered water tastes bad, that can mean the carbon filter is exhausted or that bacteria have colonized a rarely used line or tank. In many undersink RO systems, stale water in the storage tank can take on a musty flavor if you hardly use that faucet.

Cloudy filtered water is usually trapped microbubbles, especially if it clears from bottom to top in the glass. That is more of a cosmetic issue and often happens when a new filter is installed. Persistent cloudiness or floating particles point to a problem.

Why your system leaks, clogs, or runs slow

Once you know the basic flow of your system, most symptoms make more sense.

Why is my water filtration system not working at all?

If there is no water Shower Valve Repair coming out of your water filter, start with the simple checks:

- Make sure the inlet valve to the filter system is actually open. Many filter repairs end with someone discovering a half closed saddle valve.
- Confirm there is no local shutoff at the filter faucet itself.
- For RO, check if the storage tank valve is open and the tank is not completely empty due to a failed shutoff valve.

A system that once worked and suddenly stopped almost always has a local cause: a clogged pre filter, a stuck check valve, or a tank that has lost air pressure.

Why is my water filtration system slow?

A slow flowing filter faucet or shower after a whole house filter almost always points to restriction.

Common causes:

- Sediment filter clogged with rust, sand, or debris.
- Carbon filter clogged because it is absorbing very fine particles or biofilm has built up.
- RO membrane restricted or failing.
- Under sink lines kinked or crushed during cabinet storage.

After major municipal pipe work in San Dimas, I have seen homeowners clog brand new sediment filters in a week because of flushed debris. If you notice your filter system slowing right after utility work, that is a strong clue.

Why is my water filter leaking?

Leaks are usually about connections, not the filter media itself.

Typical causes:

- O rings in cartridge housings are missing, damaged, or dry. They need to be seated clean and lightly lubricated with food grade silicone.
- Filter housings or quick connect fittings were cross threaded or over tightened.
- Plastic housings cracked due to over tightening, age, or freeze damage.
- A stuck pressure relief button or air vent on some whole house units.

A slow drip can seem minor, but it can damage cabinets and walls over time. If you are trying to find a leak in your water filtration system, start by drying everything, then placing paper towels under each joint and checking back after a few minutes under pressure. The first damp towel is your culprit.

Why is my water filter making a noise?

Noise usually means air or sudden changes in pressure.

You may hear:

- A chattering or clicking sound when an RO system's automatic shutoff valve opens and closes.
- A hissing noise from a small leak or from a RO drain line discharging water.
- Water hammer clunks when a valve or solenoid closes too fast.

Continuous running noises in an RO system suggest the shutoff valve is stuck, so the unit never stops producing and sending reject water to the drain. Besides the noise, that wastes a lot of water.

What causes low water pressure after a water filter?

If your house pressure seems fine but a particular branch is weak after a filter, the filter is acting like a partially closed valve.

Common culprits:

- Undersized whole house filter cartridges used on a high flow demand home.
- Multiple fine micron filters in series without proper sizing.
- Sediment or scale buildup in older copper lines right after the filter.

You can temporarily bypass the filter to confirm the diagnosis. If pressure jumps back to normal, you know the issue lies within the filtration train.

Water still hard, cloudy, or off tasting after filtration

A frequent frustration is spending money on a system and still seeing scale or cloudy glasses.

Why is my water still hard after filtration?

If you have a single cartridge under the sink, it almost certainly does not remove hardness. Activated carbon is excellent for chlorine and taste. It does almost nothing to dissolved minerals.

A reverse osmosis system under the sink can reduce hardness significantly at that single tap, but it will not help your showers or laundry. For that, you need a whole house water softener or a properly designed anti scale system installed at the point of entry.

If you already have a softener and water is still hard, check:

- Whether the softener has salt in the brine tank.
- Whether it is set to regenerate based on realistic hardness for San Dimas.
- Whether bypass valves have been left open.

Why is my filtered water cloudy?

Short term cloudiness that clears from bottom to top is dissolved air coming out of solution. It often occurs:

- Right after a new filter is installed.
- After plumbing work or a period of high pressure.
- When cold water warms up slightly in the line.

Long lasting cloudiness or particles that sink or float can mean:

- Filter cartridges are shedding fines because they were not flushed properly.
- A carbon block has fractured and is breaking apart.
- There is biofilm growth in a little used filter or storage tank.

If cloudiness persists, it is worth replacing the cartridge and, in the case of RO, sanitizing the system.

Why does my filtered water taste bad?

Bad taste after filtration can come from:

- An exhausted carbon filter that is simply passing through chlorine and other chemicals.
- Stagnant water in a storage tank or long line that is rarely used.
- Plastic taste from new tubing that was not flushed sufficiently.

If taste suddenly worsens after years of good performance, assume the filters have reached the end of their life. Many people ask “How do I know if my water filter is bad?” Taste is one of the most obvious and immediate clues.

Maintenance: how often to replace and service your system

Manufacturers love to print simple schedules, but the real answer to “How often should water filters be replaced?” depends on your water quality and usage.

For most San Dimas homes:

- Sediment and carbon cartridges in whole house filters: about every 6 to 12 months.
- Under sink carbon filters used daily for drinking and cooking: about every 6 to 12 months.
- RO pre filters: usually 6 to 12 months.
- RO membrane: every 2 to 5 years.
- Fridge filters: often every 6 months, but at least every year if you value performance over the light on the door.

“How often should a water filtration system be serviced?” is a broader question. Once a year, it is wise to:

- Inspect all visible plumbing connections for leaks or corrosion.
- Check the condition of O rings and replace any that are cracked or flattened.
- Sanitize RO storage tanks and lines.
- Verify softener settings, regeneration cycles, and salt levels.
- Check inlet and outlet pressures where accessible to detect growing restriction.

Most homeowners can handle basic filter changes if they are comfortable shutting off water, relieving pressure, and following manufacturer instructions. If you are wondering “Can I change my water filter myself?” the answer is usually yes for standard cartridge systems, provided you take your time and protect against leaks.

One practical example: changing an under sink water filter cartridge

Here is a simple, safe approach that works for most cartridge based under sink systems and helps answer both “How do I change a water filter cartridge?” and “How do I fix an under sink water filter?” in a routine case.

- Turn off the cold water supply to the filter and open the filtered faucet to relieve pressure.

- Place a towel or shallow tray under the filter housings, then use the provided wrench to loosen and unscrew the housings, keeping them upright to minimize spills.
- Remove old cartridges, clean the housings with mild dish soap, inspect and lightly lubricate O rings, then insert new cartridges, matching flow direction arrows if present.
- Screw housings back on hand tight, then slightly snug with the wrench without over tightening, turn the water back on slowly, and check carefully for leaks.
- Flush the new filter for the time specified by the manufacturer, often several gallons, until water runs clear and air is purged.

If a housing will not budge, you are dealing with a stuck water filter. A longer handled wrench, a strap wrench, or gently tapping the housing ring can help, but do not twist so hard that you crack the plastic. At that point, having a plumber or filtration technician step in is cheaper than repairing cabinet damage from an overzealous attempt.

Repair, reset, or replace: what makes financial sense

Many homeowners eventually ask three connected questions:

- How much does a water filtration system cost?
- How much does it cost to repair a water filtration system?
- Is it cheaper to repair or replace a water filtration system?

For a basic range in the San Dimas area:

- Simple under sink carbon filters, installed: often in the 200 to 500 dollar range.
- Undersink RO systems, installed: commonly 400 to 900 dollars, depending on brand and complexity.
- Whole house sediment and carbon systems: from several hundred dollars for basic setups to a few thousand for larger or specialized units.
- Water softeners: typically 1,000 to 3,000 dollars installed for a quality residential system.

Repairs on existing systems vary widely:

- Basic service call and filter change: often in the 150 to 300 dollar range, depending on labor rates and parts.
- Replacing a RO tank, shutoff valve, or faucet: usually a few hundred dollars with parts and labor.
- Rebuilding a failing proprietary system: can approach the cost of a new, more standard unit.

“Is it worth repairing a water filtration system?” comes down to age, parts availability, and reliability. If you have a 15 year old budget RO system with proprietary filters that are hard to find, and the system is leaking from multiple fittings, replacement is often the smarter move.

On the other hand, if a 4 year old whole house system is just clogged because filters were neglected, repair is simply proper maintenance.

When people ask “Can I repair my water filtration system myself?” it is important to be honest about skill level. Many repairs are straightforward. But if you are dealing with leaks in tight spaces, old brittle plastic, or unknown plumbing modifications, hiring help is cheap insurance.

“Do I need a plumber for water filter repair?” is partly about who installed the system. In practice:

- Licensed plumbers often handle the plumbing portions and some simple filter replacements.
- Water treatment companies and filtration specialists handle more complex diagnostic work on RO and softeners.

Either can be appropriate, as long as they are familiar with the type of system you have.

Resetting, freezing, and other edge cases

Modern systems sometimes involve electronics, timers, and control heads, especially on softeners and advanced whole house filters.

If you are searching for "How do I reset my water filtration system?" you may be dealing with:

- A softener or backwashing filter with a digital control head that needs its clock and regeneration cycle reprogrammed after a power outage.
- A system with a filter change indicator that uses a timer or flow sensor. Reset instructions are usually on the front panel or in the manual.
- Some RO systems with built in TDS meters or lights triggered by elapsed time.

If you lack the manual, most brands post them online. Be sure not to erase programmed hardness or cycle settings on a softener without writing them down first.

Another question that comes up in mountain edge communities and during cold snaps is "Can a water filter system freeze and break?" Yes, any water filled plastic housing is vulnerable. If a whole house filter is installed in an uninsulated garage or exterior wall and temperatures drop below freezing for long enough, the water can freeze, expand, and crack the housing. Even San Dimas gets occasional cold nights that are enough to damage an exposed system.

If you suspect freeze damage:

- Inspect housings and fittings for hairline cracks.
- Pressurize slowly while watching for leaks.
- Replace any questionable parts before returning to full pressure.

Matching solutions to San Dimas conditions

For most San Dimas households, the priorities are clear: make drinking water taste good, reduce chlorine, and manage hard water that affects fixtures and appliances.

A common, effective combination is:

- A sediment and carbon whole house filter to protect pipes and improve baseline quality.
- A water softener sized to your home's hardness and water usage.
- A reverse osmosis system or high quality under sink filter at the kitchen sink for drinking and cooking.

That kind of setup directly answers the recurring problems: no more wondering why your filtered water still tastes like chlorine, why your water still spots the shower glass, or why your RO faucet has slowed to a drip. Each piece has a defined job, and once you understand how those pieces work, you can maintain them without guesswork.

When something does go wrong, you now have a better sense of where to look: whether a noisy RO shutoff valve, a clogged sediment cartridge choking pressure, or a tired carbon filter quietly letting chlorine back into your glass.

The technology is not magic. It is a series of straightforward mechanical and chemical processes that, when sized and maintained properly, can make a noticeable difference in daily life for a San Dimas homeowner.

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