



# Northshore Utility District

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## What is that pink "stuff" in my toilet, shower or pet's dish?

Each year, a few Northshore Utility District customers call to ask about a slimy pink substance that occasionally forms in moist areas around their home. Customers most frequently observe it in toilet bowls, on the surfaces in shower stalls and bathtub enclosures, in sinks and pet water dishes.

A red or pink pigmented bacteria known, as *Serratia marcescens* is the cause of the pink stuff. *Serratia* bacteria are common inhabitants of our environment. They can be found in many places, including human and animal feces, dust, soil, and surface water. The bacteria will grow in any moist location where phosphorous containing materials or fatty substances accumulate. Sources of these substances include soap residue in bathing areas, feces in toilets, soap and food residues in pet dishes. *Serratia* can also grow in locations such as toilets. The chlorine residual will dissipate from the toilet where water is left standing for an extended period of time. *Serratia Marcescens* is not known to cause any waterborne diseases.

Once the organism is established, it cannot be eliminated entirely. However, periodic and thorough cleaning of the surfaces followed by disinfection with chlorine bleach can control the bacteria. Scrub the surfaces with a brush and household cleaner. Disinfect the surfaces with a strong chlorine bleach solution, let stand for 10-20 minutes and thoroughly rinse away with clean water.

To control growth in the toilet, thoroughly clean the toilet bowl with a brush and a toilet bowl cleaner. Disinfect the toilet bowl and rim with a chlorine solution. You may also add a ¼ cup of chlorine bleach to the toilet tank. Let the solution stand for 10-20 minutes. Flush the toilet a couple of times to rinse the disinfectant out of the toilet tank and the toilet bowl.

If you have any questions regarding the *Serratia marcescens*, please contact Mick Holte our Water Quality Coordinator at (425) 398-4417.