

HISTORIES OF GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE FOURTH EDITION

12. Chemical fact sheets

12.1 *Chemical contaminants in drinking-water*

Hydrogen sulfide

History of guideline development

The 1958, 1963 and 1971 WHO *International Standards for Drinking-water* did not refer to hydrogen sulfide. In the first edition of the *Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality*, published in 1984, it was recommended that hydrogen sulfide should not be detectable by the consumer, based on aesthetic considerations. A guideline value was not needed, as any contamination could be easily detected by the consumer. The 1993 Guidelines did not propose a health-based guideline value, as oral toxicity data were lacking; nevertheless, it was considered unlikely that a person could consume a harmful dose of hydrogen sulfide from drinking-water. The taste and odour thresholds of hydrogen sulfide in water are estimated to be between 0.05 and 0.1 mg/l. This assessment was brought forward to the third edition of the Guidelines, published in 2004, and the fourth edition of the Guidelines, published in 2011.