HISTORIES OF GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE FOURTH EDITION

12. Chemical fact sheets

12.1 Chemical contaminants in drinking-water

pH

History of guideline development

The 1958 WHO *International Standards for Drinking-water* suggested that pH less than 6.5 or greater than 9.2 would markedly impair the potability of the water. The 1963 and 1971 International Standards retained the pH range 6.5–9.2 as the allowable or permissible range. In the first edition of the *Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality*, published in 1984, a guideline value pH range of 6.5–8.5 was established, based on aesthetic considerations. It was noted that the acceptable range of pH may be broader in the absence of a distribution system. No health-based guideline value was proposed for pH in the 1993 Guidelines. Although pH usually has no direct impact on consumers, it is one of the most important operational water quality parameters, the optimum pH required often being in the range 6.5–9.5. 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.