Why Is My Tea Cloudy? It's Almost Always Tea Cream

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Cloudy tea, in short:** Cloudy tea is almost always harmless tea cream, a natural cooling effect and a sign of a strong brew; the only real warning sign is mould in old standing tea.

"Why is my tea cloudy?" has a reassuring answer: in the overwhelming majority of cases it is a harmless, natural effect called tea cream, not a sign your tea, water or kettle is faulty. There is one real but minor exception, and this page covers both clearly.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in March 2026.

The short answer

Cloudy tea, especially iced tea or strong tea that has cooled, is almost always "tea cream": natural tea compounds (polyphenols and caffeine) bind together as the tea cools and scatter light, turning a clear brew hazy. It is completely harmless, does not affect safety, and is actually a sign of a strong, well extracted brew. It is not mould, scale or contamination.

Why it actually happens

It happens because hot tea holds those compounds in solution, and as it cools they combine into tiny particles too small to settle but big enough to cloud the liquid. Stronger, blacker, longer brewed teas cream more; hard water can increase it; rapid cooling (pouring hot tea straight over ice) makes it more pronounced. None of that indicates a problem, it is just tea chemistry doing exactly what it does.

What to actually do

If you simply do not mind it, do nothing, it is harmless and many traditional iced teas are cloudy. To minimise it: let hot tea cool gradually before chilling rather than shocking it over ice, brew slightly less strong, use filtered water if yours is very hard, or add a tiny splash of boiling water to a cloudy glass (a classic trick that re clears it). Cold brewed tea creams far less, so cold brew is the obvious fix if clarity matters to you. The exception that matters is visible mould, sliminess or an off smell in old brewed tea that has stood for a long time, which is a hygiene issue, not creaming, and that tea should be discarded.

Cloudy tea: cause and fix

What you see	What it means	What to do

Haze as strong/iced tea cools	Tea cream, harmless, sign of a strong brew	Nothing needed, or cool gradually
Worse with hard water	Minerals increase creaming	Use filtered water
Worse poured over ice	Rapid cooling, more pronounced	Cool first, then chill; or cold brew
Cloudy glass you want clear	Cosmetic only	Splash of boiling water re-clears it
Mould, slime or off smell in old tea	Hygiene issue, not creaming	Discard it

Reference noted

- Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea

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teas · Cloudy iced tea is a strong brew showing off, not a fault. If clarity matters to you, cold brew it.

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