

Lead in Drinking Water

If present, elevated levels of lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. We are responsible for providing high quality drinking water but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for 30 seconds to two minutes before using water for drinking or cooking. If you are concerned about lead in your water, you may wish to have your water tested. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline or at <http://www USEPA.gov/safewater/lead>.

Additional Facts on Lead

Lead is a naturally occurring metal that for most of the 20th century was used regularly as a component of paint, piping (including water service lines), solder (a metal used by plumbers to hold piping together), brass, and until the 1980s, as a gasoline additive. We no longer use lead in many of these products, but older products – such as paints and plumbing fixtures in older houses – can still contain lead. USEPA and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report that lead paint (and the contaminated dust and soil it generates) is the leading source of lead exposure in older housing.

While lead is rarely present in water coming from a treatment plant, it can enter tap water through corrosion of some plumbing materials. In recent years, several aggressive and successful steps have been taken to reduce the occurrence of lead in drinking water.

In 1986, Congress amended the national Safe Drinking Water Act to prohibit the use of pipe, solder, or flux containing high lead levels. The Lead Contamination Control Act of 1988 led schools and day-care centers to repair or remove water coolers with lead-lined tanks. USEPA provided guidance to inform and facilitate their action.

As the result of the implementation of the Lead and Copper Rule in 1991, many community drinking water systems are required to actively manage the corrosivity of water distributed to customers. In addition, community water systems conduct routine monitoring at selected houses with lead service lines and lead solder. If more than 10 percent of the homes tested have elevated lead levels (defined as more than 15 parts per billion), water providers must notify their consumers via several means. They must also take steps to reduce the problem, including improving corrosion control and possibly replacing lead service lines that contribute to lead contamination.

In December 2021, USEPA announced the development of a new regulation, the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (“LCRI”), to better protect communities from exposure to lead in drinking water. They have mandated a compliance date of October 16, 2024, by which all public water utilities must have Lead Service Line Inventories made available for consumers and have plans in place for removing all lead service lines.

You can’t see, smell, or taste lead in your water. ***Testing at the tap is the only way to measure the lead levels in your home or workplace.*** If you choose to have your tap water tested, be sure to use a properly certified laboratory. Testing usually costs between \$20 and \$100. If you currently have a lead service line, we provide a free, one-time test after inspecting and confirming that the service line is lead. Please contact our Water Quality Manager at 315-455-7061 extension 3157 for more information.