

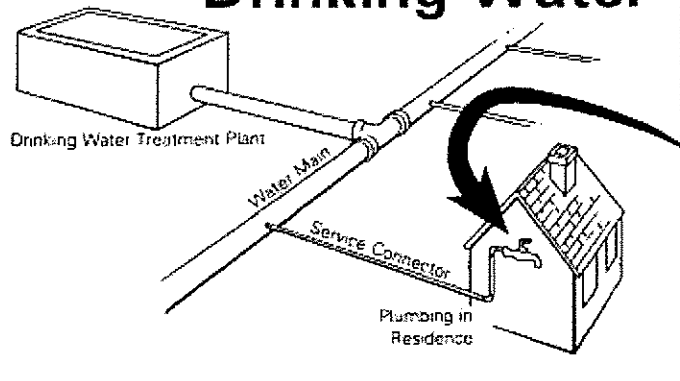


United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Office of Water
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LEAD In Your Drinking Water



Actions You Can Take To Reduce Lead In Drinking Water

◆ Flush Your Pipes Before Drinking

Anytime the water in a particular faucet has not been used for six hours or longer, "flush" your cold-water pipes by running the water until it becomes as cold as it will get. (This could take as little as five to thirty seconds if there has been recent heavy water use such as showering or toilet flushing. Otherwise, it could take two minutes or longer.) The more time water has been sitting in your home's pipes, the more lead it may contain.

◆ Only Use Cold Water for Consumption

Use *only* water from the cold-water tap for drinking, cooking, and especially for making baby formula. Hot water is likely to contain higher levels of lead.

The two actions recommended above are very important to the health of your family. They will probably be effective in reducing lead levels because most of the lead in household water usually comes from the plumbing in your house, not from the local water supply.

Health Threats From Lead

Too much lead in the human body can cause serious damage to the brain, kidneys, nervous system, and red blood cells.

You have the greatest risk, even with short-term exposure, if:

- ◆ you are a young child, or
- ◆ you are pregnant.



Sources of Lead in Drinking Water

Lead levels in your drinking water are likely to be highest if:

- ◆ your home has faucets or fittings made of brass which contains some lead, or
- ◆ your home or water system has lead pipes, or
- ◆ your home has copper pipes with lead solder, and
 - the home is less than five years old, or
 - you have naturally soft water, or
 - water often sits in the pipes for several hours.

◆ Have Your Water Tested

After you have taken the two precautions above for reducing the lead in water used for drinking or cooking, **have your water tested**. The only way to be sure of the amount of lead in your household water is to have it tested by a competent laboratory. Your water supplier may be able to offer information or assistance with testing. Testing is especially important for apartment dwellers, because flushing may not be effective in high-rise buildings with lead-soldered central piping.

For more details on the problem of lead in drinking water and what you can do about it, read the questions and answers in the remainder of this booklet. *Your local or state department of health or environment might be able to provide additional information.*



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