

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a clear glass filled with water. The background is slightly blurred, showing a blue shirt and a light-colored wall. A green circular graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title text.

Is There Lead in My Drinking Water?

What is lead?

Lead is a toxic metal that is harmful if inhaled or swallowed. Lead can be found in air, soil, dust food and water.

How does lead get into my water?

Lead enters drinking water when water comes in contact with an older plumbing system. The water wears at the metal, leaching lead into the water supply.

Lead can be present in:

- Pipes
- Solder used to connect and seal pipes
- Faucets (especially those made of brass)
- Plumbing fittings

Many factors can affect the amount of lead in your water. These include minerals in the water, how long the water stays in the pipes, the amount of wear in the pipes, and the water's acidity and temperature.

What should I do if I suspect my water has high lead levels?

Have your home's drinking water tested to find out if it contains unsafe levels of lead. Testing is the only way to know if there is lead in your water. All public water systems test regularly for lead. These tests, however, do not reflect conditions at a specific drinking water outlet.

To learn more about testing your water for lead, call the Environmental Protection Agency Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

Who is most at risk of lead exposure?

Children ages six and under are at greatest risk to lead exposure. At this age, nervous systems are still developing. Pregnant women and nursing mothers should also avoid exposure to lead to protect their children. Exposure to lead can result in delays in physical and mental development.

Your child may be at risk if:

- He or she lives in (or spends time in) a home built before lead paint was banned (1978).
- Renovation work is being done in the home.
- Adults in the home work with lead.
- Your home was constructed prior to 1986. The home's plumbing, fixtures, and service lines may contain lead.

How to reduce your family's lead exposure

- Use cold water for drinking or cooking. Never cook or mix baby formula using hot tap water.
- Run cold water at each tap for three minutes or more. Feel the temperature change before cooking, drinking, or brushing your teeth, unless otherwise instructed by your water supplier.
- Some water filters can remove lead from drinking water. If you use a filter, make sure it is certified to remove lead by the National Sanitation Foundation International (NSF).
- Consider using bottled water.

The greatest exposure to lead occurs from swallowing or breathing in lead paint chips and dust.

Boiling your water will not remove lead.

Should I test my children for lead exposure?

- Children at risk of lead exposure should be tested.
- A simple blood test can determine your child's blood lead level. Visit your doctor or local health center.
- Take preventative measures if your child's blood lead level is at or above 5ug/dl. This may include identifying and eliminating the source of lead.
- Talk to your doctor if your drinking water is found to be above the lead action level of 15ppb. Your doctor may choose to test your child's blood lead level.

Health Tip

You can help prevent lead from staying in your child's body. Serve meals that are low in fat and high in calcium, iron, and Vitamin C. Be sure to include dairy products and green vegetables.

For more questions about lead exposure in children, call the Lake County Health Department Childhood Lead Program at (847) 377-8010.

Additional information

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) National Lead Information Center: 1-800-424-LEAD | www.epa.gov/lead
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) – Lead in Water: www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm
- National Sanitation Foundation International (NSF): www.nsf.org