

# Does My Drinking Water Contain Lead?

## 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 enter my water?

Lead enters drinking water through contact with parts of a plumbing system, causing corrosion (dissolving or wearing away of metal caused by a chemical reaction with the water). Lead can be present in:

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



The amount of lead that may enter your water also depends on the types and amounts of minerals in the water, how long the water stays in the pipes, the amount of wear in the pipes, the water's acidity and its temperature.

## What should I do if I suspect that my water contains high lead levels?

- ◆ If you want to know if your home's drinking water contains unsafe levels of lead, have your water tested.
- ◆ Testing is the only way to confirm if lead is present or absent.
- ◆ All public water systems test for lead as a regular part of water monitoring. These tests, however, do not reflect conditions at a specific drinking water outlet.
- ◆ For more information on testing your water, call EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

### **Health Tip:**

**To help block the storage of lead in your child's body, serve meals that are low in fat and high in calcium, iron, and Vitamin C, including dairy products and green vegetables.**

## Should I test my children for exposure to lead?

- ◆ Children at risk of exposure to lead should be tested.
- ◆ Your doctor or local health center can perform a simple blood test to determine your child's blood lead level.
- ◆ If your child has a blood lead level at or above 5ug/dl, preventative measures should be taken, which may include identifying and eliminating the source of lead.

- ◆ If your drinking water was tested and found to be above the lead action level of 15ppb, ask your doctor about testing your child's lead level.
- ◆ For more questions about lead in children, call the Lake County Health Department's Lead Program at 847-377-8010.

### **Quick tips to reduce your family's exposure to lead**

- ◆ Use cold water for drinking or cooking; never cook or mix infant formula using hot water from the tap.
- ◆ Make it a practice to run the cold water at each tap for 3 minutes or more until you feel the temperature change before cooking, drinking, or brushing your teeth, unless otherwise instructed by your water supplier.
- ◆ Some faucet and pitcher filters can remove lead from drinking water. If you use a filter, be sure to obtain one that is certified to remove lead by the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) International, or consider using bottled water.
- ◆ While drinking water can contain lead, the greatest exposure to lead occurs from swallowing or breathing in lead paint chips and dust.

## **Boiling your water will not remove lead**

### **Who is most at risk from exposure to lead?**

Children ages 6 and under are at the greatest risk from exposure to lead because their 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 intellectual development.

Your child may be at risk if:

- ◆ your home or a home that your child spends time in was built before lead paint was banned (1978).
- ◆ renovation work is being conducted in such a home.
- ◆ adults in the home work with lead.
- ◆ your home was constructed prior to 1986 (the household plumbing, fixtures and service lines may contain lead).

### **Additional sources of information**

**EPA National Lead Information Center 1-800-424-LEAD or [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead)**

**Centers for Disease Control (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm>**

**NSF International [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org)**

**Lake County Health Department & Community Health Center  
Prevention-Environmental Health Services  
500 W Winchester Road  
Libertyville, IL 60048  
847-377-8020**



**LakeCounty**  
Health Department and  
Community Health Center