



Addresses your concerns about Lead in Drinking Water

November 2006

H*ow does lead get into drinking water?*

Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminations in that it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like rivers and lakes. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of the corrosion, or wearing away, of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and household plumbing. Lead can be found in some metal water taps, interior water pipes, or pipe connections to the main water pipe. Other materials that contain lead include lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, and brass and chrome-plated brass faucets. In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing greater than 0.2% lead, and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes and other plumbing materials to 8.0%. These products are referred to as "lead-free".

When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems that contain leaded materials for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon if the water has not been used all day, can contain fairly high levels of lead.

W*hat does it mean that some water samples tested higher than the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) action level?*

EPA has set standards for drinking water designed to protect the public health and the sources of water themselves. There are standards for over 90 possible contaminants in water including lead. For lead, the EPA action level is 15 parts per billion (PPB) or 0.015 milligrams of lead per liter of water (mg/L). Some drinking water samples taken from your distribution system had lead levels above the EPA action level.

The EPA action level for lead is set very low to alert the water department that there are possible corrosion problems. This is usually an indication there may be leaching of lead from household plumbing or service lines. The lead level in water is not directly related to lead levels in blood. Elevated lead levels in water are only one of many sources of lead for people.

W*hat can I do to get rid of the lead?*

Exposure to lead in drinking water can be lowered, in most cases, by taking some simple steps:

- o The single most important thing you can do to reduce lead levels in your drinking water is to flush your system. "Flushing" means running the cold water faucet for about 15-30 seconds. Let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than six hours.
- o Use only cold water for cooking and drinking. Hot water can dissolve lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold tap and then heat it.

By flushing the tap and using only cold water for cooking and drinking (including brushing teeth) you should be able to reduce any risk that exists.

C*an my child get lead poisoning from the water?*

Lead in drinking water is rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning in children. Children are at greatest risk of lead exposure from lead-based paint or dust that contains lead. Lead-based paints were banned for use on housing in 1978. Homes built prior to 1978 may contain lead-based paint. This paint can peel, and/or produce dust that can be eaten or breathed in by young children. Children can also be exposed to lead paint chips and dust during renovation of older homes. Water may increase the total lead exposure, but it is seldom the primary source of lead.

S*hould I use bottled water?*

Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your health. However, if you are still concerned you can use bottled water for drinking, cooking or mixing baby formula and juices.

I *Is it safe to take a bath or shower?*

Bathing and showering is safe for you and your children, even if the water contains lead over EPA action level. Our skin does not absorb lead in water.

D *Did the landlord do something wrong?*

No. This is part of routine sampling that is done per EPA regulations. The number of samples that tested above the 15 ppb level exceeded the percentage allowed. Water has been tested for lead and copper since the standard was implemented in 1991. Since the sample result cannot tell us if there is a possible problem with the plumbing at the unit where the sample was taken or something related to the service line, The situation will need to be evaluated further. The EPA standard is not set for health; it is simply an indication that there may be corrosion in the system.

H *How can I learn more about lead in drinking water?*

The Eastern Highlands Health District website (www.ehhd.org) contains information links for lead concerns including lead in drinking water. If you need this information sent to you, please call our office at 860-429-3325.

W *Will boiling the water get rid of lead?*

Boiling your water will not get rid of lead.

H *How do I know if my water has lead in it?*

The only way to know the level of lead in your tap water is to have it tested. You cannot see, taste or smell lead in drinking water. Some state approved laboratories in our area that you can call to have your water tested for lead include:

Fallon Water Analysis 860-871-2529
Premier Laboratory 860-774-6814

Phoenix Lab 860-645-1102
Northeast Lab 860-826-0105

S *Should I have my child tested for lead?*

Children less than 6 years old are at the highest risk of lead exposure. The Director of Health is not recommending that you have your child tested just on the basis of these water sample results. If you 'flush' your pipes before consuming, the water is safe to drink for you and your family.

Pediatricians routinely screen children for lead at 1 and 2 years of age. If your child is less than 6 years old and has never been screened for lead, you may want to call your child's physician's office to get more information about lead and if a blood test is appropriate for your child.

I *have a chronic condition (e.g., diabetes, heart, cancer, etc.). Should I be concerned?*

No. Flushing your tap and only using cold water to consume will make your water safe to drink. There are no additional concerns for chronic health conditions.

I *'m pregnant. Should I be concerned?*

The water is safe to drink after flushing the tap, and should pose no health risk. However, if you have concerns you may want to get your water tested or speak with your obstetrician.

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