

Information about the potential for Lead in Drinking Water coming out of your tap

What Are the Sources of Lead?

Lead is rarely found in natural sources of water, such as groundwater.

You may be in contact with lead through paint, water, dust, soil, food, hobbies, or your job. The most common way for Minnesotans to come in contact with lead is through lead-based paint found in homes built before 1978.

Lead can also get into drinking water after it leaves the treatment plant, as it passes through your household plumbing system. Homes built before 1940 may have lead service lines that connect them to public water. Plumbing systems built before 1986 may have lead parts. New “lead free” pipes and plumbing parts may still contain 0.25% lead. Brass parts may also contain some lead. Note that many faucets are made of brass even if they do not have a “brass” color. The amount of lead that gets into drinking water depends on many factors, such as the amount of lead in plumbing materials, water chemistry, and water usage.

What Are the Health Effects of Lead?

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body.

The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children.

Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead can be stored in the bones, and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.

How Can I Reduce My Exposure to Lead in Water?

1. **Let the water run** before using it for drinking or cooking. If you have a lead service line, let the water run for 3-5 minutes. If you do not have a lead service line, let the water run for 30-60 seconds. The more time water has been sitting in your pipes, the more lead it may contain.
 - You can find out if you have a lead service line by contacting your public water system
 - Ways to let the water run before using it for drinking or cooking:
 - Do household tasks like showering or running the dishwasher first
 - Collect tap water for cleaning or watering plants
 - Make sure you let the water run from individual faucets for a short time before using them for drinking or cooking.
 - Consider keeping a container of drinking water in the refrigerator to reduce how often you need to let the water run.
2. **Use cold water** for drinking, making food, and making baby formula. Hot water releases more lead from pipes than cold water. Boiling water does not reduce lead levels and may actually increase them.
3. **Test your water.** The only way to know if lead has been reduced by letting it run is to check with a test. If letting the water run does not reduce lead, consider other options to reduce your exposure.
4. **Treat your water** or find an alternative source if a test shows your water has high levels of lead after you let the water run.