

# Lead in Drinking Water

## What can be done to reduce lead levels in drinking water?

### Test The Water For Lead

Each tap or fixture providing water used for cooking or drinking should be tested every 5 years by a **certified lab**.

### Flush Taps Before Use

If lab test results show high lead levels, it is recommended that you implement a flushing program.

- To flush the tap, run the water for at least 1-2 minutes or until you feel the water become the coldest it will get.
- Flush the taps used for drinking and cooking at least 2x/day.

You can use this water for cleaning, watering plants, or to put into your toilet tank if you want to conserve water.

### Use Only Cold Water For Drinking And Food Preparation

Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead than cold water. Only use water from the cold water tap for drinking, preparing juice, mixing baby formula, or food preparation.

### Routine Maintenance

- Unscrew, clean, and replace the aerator screens at the end of faucets.
- Replace filters regularly.

## How Does Lead Get Into Drinking Water?

Measures taken during the last two decades have greatly reduced exposures to lead in tap water. Even so, lead still can be found in some metal water taps, interior water pipes, or pipes connecting a house to the main water pipe in the street. Lead found in tap water usually comes from the corrosion of older fixtures or from the solder that connects pipes. When water sits in leaded pipes for several hours, lead can leach into the water supply.

## How Do I Know if My Tap Water is Contaminated By Lead?



The only way to know whether your tap water contains lead is to have it tested. You cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. Therefore, you must ask your water provider whether your water has lead in it. For homes served by public water systems, data on lead in tap water may be available on the Internet from your local water authority. If your water provider does not post this information, you should call and find out.

## Does A High Level of Lead in My Tap Water Cause Health Effects?

High levels of lead in tap water can cause health effects if the lead in the water enters the bloodstream and causes an elevated blood lead level.

Most studies show that exposure to lead-contaminated water alone would not be likely to elevate blood lead levels in most adults, even exposure to water with a lead content close to the EPA action level for lead of 15 parts per billion (ppb). Risk will vary, however, depending on the individual, the circumstances, and the amount of water consumed. For example, infants who drink formula prepared with lead-contaminated water may be at a higher risk because of the large volume of water they consume relative to their body size.

Bathing and showering should be safe for you and your children, even if the water contains lead over EPA's action level. Human skin does not absorb lead in water.