



Your Water. Your Health. Our Priority. SM

Straight Talk On Lead

From time to time, concerns are raised over the levels of lead that may be present in local water supplies. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) notes that “the greatest exposure to lead is swallowing or breathing in lead paint chips or dust. However, lead can enter tap water through corrosion of some plumbing materials. Following are some important considerations to keep in mind.

- The EPA instituted a stringent lead regulation in 1991 to help ensure that our nation’s water remains safe.
- Since 1992, all public drinking water systems are required to regularly test for lead levels in water supplies. Water suppliers initially collected samples from home taps twice a year and analyzed them to find out if lead was present.
- If the results from lead testing exceed the EPA “action level” of 15 parts per billion in more than 10 percent of homes tested, individual public water utilities are required to notify area residents via newspapers, radio, TV and other means and take specific actions to reduce this amount. Residents are also provided with information on the steps they can take at home to lower their exposure to lead.
- In instances of high lead levels in water, the most common sources are lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, faucets made of brass and chrome-plated brass, and in some cases, pipes made of lead that connect a home to the water main.
- In 1986, Congress banned the use of solder containing more than 0.2% lead and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes, and other plumbing materials.
- Concerned residents can take several precautionary steps to limit possible exposure:
 - Flushing your water tap is a simple method to avoid high lead levels. Let the cold water run from the tap (until noticeably colder, usually about one minute, but sometimes longer) before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in the faucet has gone unused for more than a few hours.
 - Also, residents should not cook or drink water from the hot water tap.
 - Residents who are interested in learning if lead is present in their water can also have their water tested by a State-certified laboratory.
 - Some filters can remove lead from water at the tap, but the filters also require proper maintenance. Choose an NSF-approved filter for lead.

Water utility professionals are committed to providing residents with high-quality, safe drinking water. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact your local water utility.