



YOUR WATER.



YOUR HEALTH.



OUR PRIORITY. SM

STRAIGHT Talk **Lead in Water**

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, while lead is rarely present in water coming from a treatment plant, it can enter tap water through corrosion of some plumbing materials. Lead builds up in the body over many years and can cause damage to the brain, red blood cells and kidneys. The greatest risk is to young children, pregnant women and their unborn babies.

- ▶ Since 1992, all public drinking water systems are required to regularly test a sample of high-risk homes for lead at the tap.
- ▶ 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 water utilities are required to notify area residents via newspapers, radio, TV and other means.
- ▶ 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 steps to limit possible exposure:

- ▶ You can’t see, smell or taste lead in your water. Testing at the tap is the only way to measure the lead levels in your home or workplace. If you choose to have your tap water tested, be sure to use a properly certified laboratory. Testing usually costs between \$20 and \$100.
- ▶ Flushing your water tap clears water from your plumbing and home service line to ensure you are getting drinking water from the main, where lead is rarely present. Let the water run from the tap until it is noticeably colder (this may take two minutes or more) before using it for cooking or drinking. Flushing the tap is particularly important when the faucet has gone unused for more than a few hours.

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- ▶ Some home treatment devices remove lead, but not all do. Before you purchase a home treatment device, you should verify the manufacturer's claims. A good resource to assist you is NSF International = www.nsf.org. Once a treatment device is installed, make sure it is properly maintained.
- ▶ Use only cold water for cooking or drinking. Lead leaches more easily into hot water than cold water. Boiling water DOES NOT remove lead.
- ▶ Consult with your family doctor or pediatrician to receive a blood test for lead and learn more about the health effects associated with exposure.



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