



FAQ for Lead

How can lead get into tap water?

The most common way lead gets into tap water is from lead pipes, which were used in plumbing before 1930. Water leaving the City's water treatment facilities is tested to ensure it's lead-free.

What is the Lead and Copper Rule?

On June 7, 1991, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency published a regulation to control lead and copper in drinking water. This regulation, known as the Lead and Copper Rule, requires water utilities to monitor drinking water at customer taps. If the 90 percentile for lead exceeds an action level of 15 parts per billion or the 90th percentile for copper exceeds an action level of 1.3 parts per million, the system must undertake a number of additional actions to control corrosion. If the action level for lead is exceeded, the water supply must also inform the public about steps they should take to protect their health and the water supply may have to replace lead service lines under their control.

Has the City ever had a violation of the Lead and Copper Rule?

No, the City's Water Treatment and Distribution division has never had any violations of the Lead and Copper Rule.

What is a service connection, and why are some made out of lead?

A service connection is the water pipe that connects from the water main on your street to the piping inside your home. In the City of Minneapolis, service lines to residential properties installed prior to 1930 were usually made out of lead piping. Typically, the lead portion of the service connection is from the water main to the stop box, with the portion connecting the stop box to the water meter made out of galvanized metal. In other communities, the lead portion of the service connection can include the piping from the water main to the water meter. The stop box is typically located on the residential property and used to turn on or off the water without entering the residence.

In Minneapolis, service lines are the responsibility of the property owners. Service lines that are made of lead can't be repaired; they can only be replaced. Property owners that want to know whether their service line is lead can call the Minneapolis Public Works Utility Connections office at 612-673-2451.

Does the City monitor for lead in tap water inside of homes?

Yes. Lead concentrations are checked every three years from residential locations known as the "tier 1" sampling pool. The tier 1 residences must be single family structures with:

- lead service lines,
- lead pipes, or

- copper pipes soldered with lead installed after 1982 but before the ban on solder containing high concentrations of lead (1985).

In 2018 we conducted lead monitoring at 50 tier 1 sites. Fifty (50) homes were tested throughout the City of Minneapolis which had either a lead service line or a copper service line with lead solder. All homes tested below the EPA's Action Level for copper. Two homes tested above the 15 parts per billion (ppb) Action Level for lead. One was 24 ppb and one was 17 ppb. Follow up testing showed the lead levels were from the kitchen faucet not the premise plumbing. Letting the water run briefly decreased the lead levels to below 1 ppb.

More information on lead in faucets can be found below.

The 90th percentile lead result was 4 ppb, well below the 15 ppb Action Level. In 42 of the samples lead was below the detection level of 2 ppb. Two homes were above the Action Level (mentioned above) and the rest were between 2 ppb and 6 ppb.

All samples collected were analyzed by an independent certified laboratory contracted by the Minnesota Department of Health. Ten of the fifty sample were rejected prior to analysis due to an error at the certified laboratory. These locations were resampled and analyzed. Our thanks to those customers who had to sample twice.

Because of our low lead levels, we qualified for reduced monitoring in 2002. Monitoring was reduced from 100 samples to 50. All locations are checked to ensure they meet tier 1 requirements.

Has the City changed its source for tap water?

No. Minneapolis' source water has always been the Mississippi River

What does the City do to prevent pipe corrosion?

The City adds ortho polyphosphate to the water, a chemical that specifically prevents water line corrosion. The Minnesota Department of Health requires our system to maintain an ortho phosphate concentration of 0.4 parts per million throughout the distribution system. We submit samples from 10 sites throughout our system quarterly to the Minnesota Department of Health for ortho phosphate analysis. The average result for 2018 was 0.51 parts per million; the range was 0.42-0.63 parts per million.

Also, the City reduces the acidity of the water from the Mississippi River. Maintaining a pH of 8.8-9.0 ensures that the water is noncorrosive.

Where can I get more information on lead in drinking water?

- www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/water/factsheet/com/letitrun_english.html
- www.drinktap.org/water-info/whats-in-my-water/lead-in-water.aspx
- www.epa.gov/lead/index.html.

How can lead be reduced in tap water?

Let It Run. If you are concerned about lead in your drinking water you can flush the taps before using water from them for drinking or cooking. Water that stands idle in pipes for long periods of time, such as overnight or during the day when people are gone to work and school, is more likely to absorb materials from the plumbing system. The best way to rid the pipes of water that may contain lead is to let the cold-water faucet

run until you feel that the water is as cold as it will get. The amount of time this takes will depend on your home and how its plumbing is arranged-but you should always run the water for at least 60 seconds.

If your home has a lead service line (which you can determine by asking your local water utility), you should flush water for an additional 2 to 3 minutes to make sure you are getting fresh water from the water main. Be sure to flush standing water before using any water for drinking or cooking purposes.

Tips for flushing:

- Other household water uses will also help clear standing water from your home's plumbing. For example, you may want to establish a routine of doing household tasks that use water-such as showering, flushing the toilet, or running the dishwasher-first thing in the morning before using water for drinking or cooking. Keep in mind that you'll still need to flush individual faucets for a short time before using them for drinking water.
- The water you run from drinking water taps does not have to be wasted. You can use this water for cleaning purposes or for watering plants.
- You may want to keep a container of drinking water in your refrigerator, so you don't have to run water every time you need it.

Use Only Cold Water for Cooking and Drinking. Hot water dissolves lead more quickly than cold water, so don't use water from your hot-water faucet for cooking or drinking. If you need hot water for cooking or drinking, take water from the cold tap and heat it. It is especially important not to use the hot water for making baby formula.

Identifying and Purchasing Lead-Free Faucets

Do faucets have lead?

Most faucets purchased prior to 1997 were constructed of brass or chrome-plated brass containing up to 8 percent lead. Water sitting overnight (or for several hours) in a brass faucet tends to leach lead from the brass faucet interior which may produce relatively high lead levels in the first draw of drinking water. Lead is of potential health concern, especially for children and pregnant women, since it can build up in the body and cause damage to the brain, red blood cells, and kidneys.

How can I tell if a new faucet is "lead free"?

Faucet manufacturers responding to recent regulations have decreased or eliminated the lead in residential kitchen faucets, bathroom faucets, bar faucets, drinking fountains, and icemakers. The national standard for certifying the "lead free" status of plumbing fixtures is National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) International Standard 61-Section 9. NSF provides catalogs and a computer web site listing approved "lead free" fixtures. NSF can be reached at 1-800-NSF-MARK or www.nsf.org. New faucets meeting the NSF 61 standard will have NSF 61/9 stamped on the new faucet's cardboard box.

Note that the term "lead free" may be misleading since its legal definition allows a faucet to leach up to 11 parts per billion (ppb) of lead using a standard test protocol. The national action level for lead in drinking water is 15 ppb. California has a stricter standard for faucet lead leaching via Proposition 65 and can leach up to 5 ppb of lead and bathroom faucets can leach up to 11 ppb. Any faucet sold in California, which does not

meet the California standard, must have a Proposition 65-package warning insert or a warning hang tag.

If your new faucet has both a NSF 61/9 stamp on the cardboard box and has no Proposition 65 warning, then your faucet is both a "lead-free" and an ultra-low lead faucet. This is the most desirable faucet.

Are there any faucets with no lead at all?

Some faucet manufactures produce plastic faucets that have virtually zero lead. Other manufactures are substituting other metals for the lead in the brass, inserting copper tubes inside the brass faucets, or applying special coatings on the inside of the faucets in order to minimize or eliminate lead leaching.

Does it really matter if I have an ultra-low lead faucet?

In extreme cases older faucets can contribute up to one-third of the lead in the first-draw of water in the morning with the remainder coming from other plumbing such as pre-1988 lead solder joints in copper pipes. Residents who let the water run at the tap in the morning for one minute and use cold water for cooking should have little concern with respect to lead in the drinking water. If residents are still concerned, they can request from their water supplier a lead test (at a nominal charge that can be waived under special circumstances) or a list of local laboratories approved for lead testing. Residents always have the option of replacing an older kitchen or bathroom faucet with a new ultra-low lead faucet.

Do some plumbing fixtures still contain lead?

Federal and State lead regulations do not cover hose bibs, bathtub fixtures, shower heads, and industrial faucets. Avoid drinking or cooking with water from these fixtures. Since the year 2000, all kitchen faucets sold in California have been ultra-low lead and in 2010, when any water fixtures and fittings intended to convey drinking water are replaced, they must be replaced with ultra-low lead products (containing no more than 0.25 percent lead). Similar requirements are not in place in Minnesota.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency operates a National Lead Information Center at 800-424-LEAD (5323) or can be reached at its website www.epa.gov/lead.

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