

Lead in Drinking Water

Sources of Lead

Lead is rarely found in natural bodies of water such as rivers or lakes. Leaving the water treatment plant, water is lead-free. Travelling through leaded pipes or plumbing with leaded solder, water can absorb the lead. Through a chemical reaction called corrosion, water reacts with the pipes, causing them to break down, dissolving lead into the water.

Although lead pipes and solder were banned in 1991, some homes built before the 1940's may have leaded service lines. Lead service lines, plumbing, soldering or faucets can all be sources of lead contamination.

Galvanized steel can also contribute to lead contamination. It can absorb particles from lead connectors or goosenecks upstream of the service line, and release it into the water years later.

Physical effects of lead exposure

The wide-ranging physical effects of lead include brain, kidney, and red blood cell production damage. Effects on children are especially pronounced. Children exposed to lead can experience slowed growth and development, learning and behavioral issues, and hearing and speech problems. The blood lead level considered safe in children is currently zero. Long term neurological issues can develop from even low levels of lead exposure.

Lead Testing

Plumbing Testing

If you are concerned that any soldering, pipes, or fixtures within your home plumbing contain lead, the EPA has a list of certified lead testing kits that can swab any object to detect lead.

<https://www.epa.gov/lead/lead-test-kits>

Water Testing

If you find that your portion of the service line or plumbing contains lead, you can test your water for lead.

Blood Testing

If you believe you or any children have been exposed to lead from drinking water, any primary care provider can administer a blood lead level test.