

Lead in Drinking Water



Steps to Lower Lead in Water

If you have received a letter from your local water supply pointing out that high levels of lead have been found in your community water or you live in an older home built before 1986, take the following safety measures:

- **Flush your pipes when water has not been used for 6-8 hours before using it for drinking or cooking.** Water should be run for 15-30 seconds or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature.
- **Use cold water for cooking, drinking and making baby formula and cereal.** Lead dissolves better in hot water and will become concentrated in boiled water. Never use hot water from the tap to mix infant formula.
- **Find out whether the service line that connects your home to the water main is made of lead.** Hire a licensed plumber or contact the plumbing contractor who installed the line.
- **Have your water tested.** Contact your local community water supply for more information. This needs to be done by an Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) certified laboratory and usually includes a fee.
- **Get tested if you are pregnant or have children.** Contact your local health department or healthcare provider to find out how to get tested for lead.

Extra Steps to Take

If you have received a letter that there are high levels of lead in your community water and you have **not** had your water tested:

- **Pregnant women, infants and children under the age of 6 should use bottled water for drinking, cooking and making baby formula.** These groups are at the most risk of exposure. A fluoride supplement may be needed because most bottled water does not contain fluoride.

If you have had your water tested and the lead levels are above the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) action level of 15 ppb:

- **Use bottled water or a filtration system.** If your tap water has been confirmed as being high in lead by a certified laboratory, consider using bottled water or use a water filter that is certified to remove lead by the NSF International.

Who is at most risk?

- Pregnant women
- Infants
- Children under the age of 6.

How does lead get into my drinking water?

Lead rarely occurs naturally in lakes and rivers. Instead, it mostly enters drinking water through the water distribution system and household plumbing. Lead leaches into water from household pipes, faucets, fittings and solder. Older homes are most at risk of having lead in water because lead pipes were commonly used until the 1940s and lead solder was used until 1986. Other sources of lead in the home are brass and chrome-plated faucets. The more time water has been sitting in the pipes, the more lead it may contain.

How To Find Out If Lead Is In Your Drinking Water

Contact your local water supply for the latest copy of the annual *Consumer Confidence Report (CCR)*.

Health Effects of Lead

Lead exposure affects everyone but pregnant women, young children and infants are at the most risk. There is no safe blood lead level in children and exposure can lead to:

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Slowed growth and development
- Problems with learning and behavior

The most important step is to prevent lead exposure before it happens. Talk to your doctor about lead exposure if you have young children or are pregnant or nursing.



Contact Information:

For more information about lead in your water, call EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

To find an Oklahoma DEQ certified laboratory for testing, contact the State Laboratory Services Lab Certification program at 1-866-412-3057 or online at <http://www.deq.state.ok.us/CSDnew/labcert.htm>.

For more information on childhood lead poisoning contact the Oklahoma Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program by e-mail at oklppp@health.ok.gov or phone at (405) 271-6671 or toll free at 1-800-766-2223.



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