

WATER

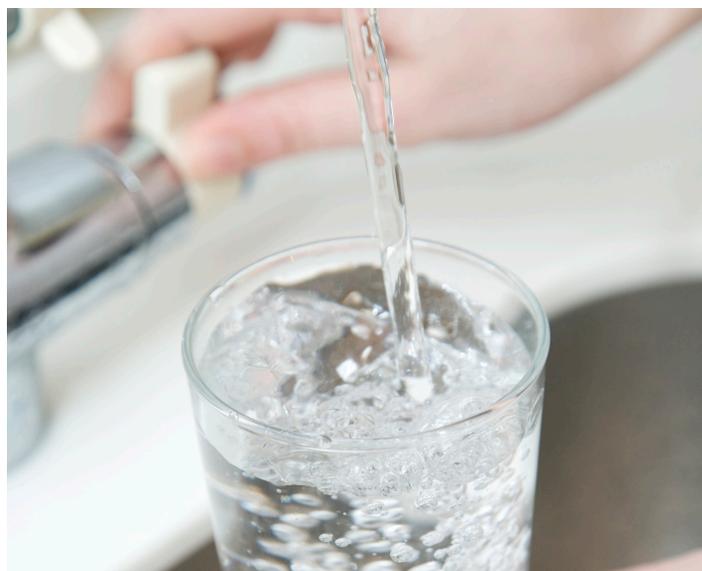
Lead in Drinking Water

Lead can be found in air, soil, dust, food, and water. The main sources of exposure to lead are ingesting paint chips and inhaling dust. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 10 to 20 percent of human exposure to lead may come from lead in drinking water. Infants who consume mostly mixed formula can receive 40 to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water.

You cannot see, taste, or smell lead dissolved in water. Testing is the only sure way of telling whether there are harmful quantities of lead in your drinking water.

Most lead gets into drinking water when the water comes into contact with plumbing materials containing lead. These include lead pipes, lead solder, as well as faucets, valves, and other components made of brass. "Lead free" plumbing may contain traces of lead. The amount of lead in your water also depends on the types and amounts of minerals in the water, how long the water stays in the pipes, the amount of wear in the pipes, the water's acidity and its temperature.

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.



Steps you can take to reduce your exposure to lead in your water:

- Run your water to flush out lead. If water hasn't been used for several hours, run water for several minutes before using it for drinking or cooking.
- Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula. Lead dissolves more easily into hot water.
- Do not boil water to remove lead. Boiling water will not reduce lead.
- Look for alternative sources or treatment of water. You may want to consider purchasing a water filter or bottled water.
- Test your water for lead. If you think you may have elevated lead levels in your home drinking water, have it tested. Call John Ashford (State Environmental Laboratory) at 405-702-1027 for more information.
- Get your child's blood tested. Contact your local health department or health care provider to find out how you can get your child tested for lead, if you are concerned about exposure.

Additional information available at www.epa.gov and www.cdc.gov