

DRINKING WATER QUALITY IN THE HOME

Responses to Frequently Asked Questions About Lead and Copper in Water

1. What steps can I take to maintain drinking water quality in my home?

Residents can take steps to protect water quality in their home. Actions that help to preserve water quality include:

- Use cold water for drinking and preparing food.
- Flush your tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than 6 hours. Flushing the tap means running the cold water for 30 seconds to 2 minutes until it gets noticeably colder.
- Clean faucet aerators and strainers monthly. Replace aerators in poor condition.
- Clean and disinfect sinks and faucets regularly.
- Replace your refrigerator and icemaker filters according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Replace any other water filters used according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your family's health. When water stands in lead pipes or pipes with lead solder for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon after returning from work or school, may contain higher levels of lead.

Additional beneficial plumbing tips include:

- Drain and flush your hot water heater annually.
- Identify and replace plumbing fixtures containing lead. Brass faucets, fittings and valves may leach lead into drinking water. Products sold after January 4, 2014, must by law contain very low levels of lead.
- Be sure backflow protection devices are installed properly.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR WATER QUALITY, CONTACT YOUR MUNICIPALITY.



Cleaning faucet aerators monthly and running cold water to flush a faucet that hasn't been used for 6 or more hours help preserve drinking water quality in your home.

- Corrosion may be greater if grounding wires from the electrical system are attached to your pipes. Check with the licensed electrician or your local electrical code to determine if your wiring can be grounded elsewhere. **DO NOT** attempt to change the wiring yourself because improper grounding can cause electrical shock and fire hazards.

2. How do I flush my internal plumbing?

The amount of time you should run the cold water to flush your internal plumbing depends on whether you have a lead service line, the length of the lead service line and amount of plumbing in your home. Running your water until you feel a temperature change will indicate the water is from outside your premises' plumbing. Once that has occurred, flush an additional 1 to 2 minutes to ensure you are receiving water from the water main and not your service line.

Note: At one gallon per minute, a 2-minute flush for a 50-foot service line is the recommended standard.



3. How do I remove, clean and replace my faucet aerators?

Faucet aerators are used to provide a steady flow of water from the faucet with even pressure that prevents splashing and can reduce water usage. Aerators typically include a screen and rubber washer. The screen can become dirty collecting sediment and metals including particulate lead. Monthly cleaning of aerators is recommended. If the screen is in poor condition or damaged, it should be replaced. Hardware stores sell replacement parts.



To clean your aerator:

1. Unscrew the aerator housing. New faucet frequently come with a tool to remove the aerator.
2. Separate the aerator into individual rubber washer and screen parts (if possible).
3. Remove any sediment (mineral or rust build up) on the screen and other parts. If necessary, soak the parts in white vinegar for a few minutes and scrub with a brush.
4. Reassemble the aerator parts and re-attach to faucet (using tool if necessary).

4. Can construction activity in my neighborhood affect my drinking water?

Yes, when the ground is disturbed close to your home, particles can shake free from inside the network of underground pipes including your service line. Having a lead service line can increase your risk of exposure to lead when the ground is disturbed. Particulate lead is like tiny grains of sand. These tiny pieces can fall off the sides of pipes into the water. It can cause the lead level in water to go up quickly and then go back down. During construction and until your lead service line is replaced, you should take the following precautions.

- Clean your faucet aerator at least monthly. Lead particles can build up on the aerator screen so cleaning them is important.
- Flush your tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than 6 hours. Flushing the tap means running the cold water for 30 seconds to 2 minutes until it gets noticeably colder.
- Use a filter when drinking or cooking particularly if you are pregnant or have children under the age of 6. A filter is especially important if you are making baby formula. Make sure the filter meets the

National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) standard 53 for lead removal. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for replacement. Contact NSF International at 800-NSF-8010 or visit their website at www.nsf.org for more information.

- Do not boil water to remove lead, boiling will not remove lead.

5. What is the difference between particulate lead and soluble lead?

Soluble lead is lead that dissolves in water. Corrosion control treatment using orthophosphate reduces the amount of soluble lead in water by creating a protective layer inside the pipe.

Particulate lead is the size of tiny grains of sand. These tiny pieces can fall off the sides of pipes into the water. It can cause the lead level in water to spike and drop suddenly. Construction activity in your neighborhood can increase the risk of particulate lead, especially when the ground is disturbed close to your home.

- Use a filter if you are concerned about particulate lead. Make sure the filter you purchase is designed to remove both particulate and soluble lead, and replace the filter cartridge as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Clean your aerator at least monthly or more frequently on all your faucets since lead particles can build up on the aerator screen when construction activity is close to your home.



Consider replacing old plumbing fixtures made of brass or that contain lead. Products sold after January 4, 2014, must by law contain very low levels of lead.



Sediment, bacteria, minerals and metals can build up in your hot water heater tank. This can impact household water quality and water pressure. Drain and flush your hot water tank annually. See "How to Flush Your Hot Water Heater Tank" information sheet.