

Lead Service Lines and Drinking Water Best Management Practices

LEAD IN WATER: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

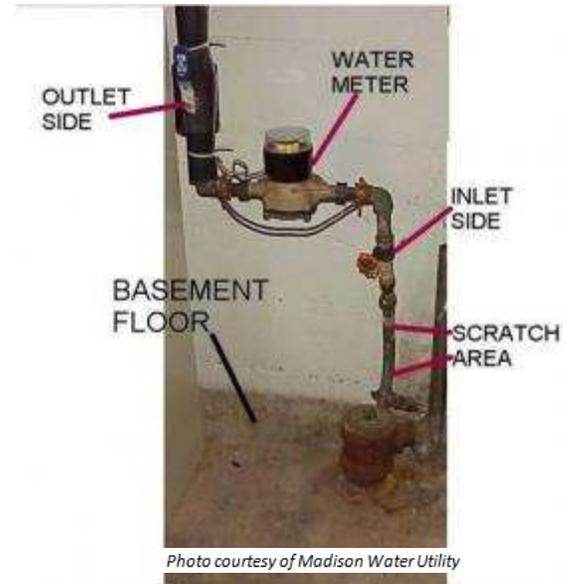
The amount of lead in water will vary based on the plumbing in a building, how much water is used, and how often it is used. Homes and business buildings built before 1951 were likely constructed with service lines made of lead, which connect the building plumbing to water mains under the street. Lead can also be found in interior plumbing pipes, solder and some plumbing fixtures.

IDENTIFYING A LEAD SERVICE PIPE

Tools needed: flathead screwdriver, refrigerator magnet

Lead pipes are dull gray in color and are soft enough to be easily scratched with a house key. A magnet will not stick to a lead pipe. A licensed plumber can determine if your service line and/or plumbing are made of lead and can replace them for you at your cost.

- Locate the water service pipe coming into the building (usually in the basement). An "inlet valve" and the water meter are installed on the pipe after the point of entry.
- Identify a test area on the pipe between the point where it comes into the building and the inlet valve.
- If the pipe is covered or wrapped, expose a small area of metal.
- Use the flat edge of a screwdriver or other tool to scratch through any corrosion that might have built up on the outside of the pipe.



Lead Pipe

If the scratched area is shiny and silver, your service line is lead. A magnet will not stick to a lead pipe.



Copper Pipe

If the scratched area is copper in color, like a penny, your service line is copper. A magnet will not stick to copper pipe.



Lead Service Lines and Drinking Water Best Management Practices

Galvanized Steel Pipe

If the scratched area remains a dull gray, and a magnet will stick to the surface, your service line is galvanized steel.



Photo courtesy of Madison Water Utility

STEPS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER

Lead can also be found in interior pipes and some plumbing fixtures. If you don't know whether your tap water contains lead, you should have the water tested by a certified lab. Proper sampling is required to obtain a valid result. (Note: A single test for lead level in drinking water may not be representative of the level at all times or of the average level over time.)

You can visit the DNR's website for a list of certified laboratories and to get lead sampling procedure information at: dnr.wi.gov/topic/drinkingwater/lead.html.

If your lead water service is lead, was lead and has recently been replaced or if there are other sources of lead in your internal plumbing and fixtures, following are steps you can take to reduce your exposure. Infants, small children under the age of six and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding are at special risk.

1. **Flush your plumbing.** Before using tap water for drinking, cooking, or preparing infant formula, flush your plumbing by running the cold water three minutes or longer until the water is noticeably cold. This process replaces water in the house plumbing and service line with water from the water main. Do this if the water has been standing unused in your pipes for more than six hours, such as overnight or during the work day. It is safe to shower, wash laundry and flush the toilet if you have a lead service line. These activities help flush the pipes. After any water utility work or household plumbing work, it is also important that you flush your household plumbing. Physical disturbance of the lead service line or lead piping by activities such as water main replacement, service line leaks, home plumbing repair, water meter replacement or main breaks may release lead into the water.
2. **Only drink and cook with cold water from the cold water tap.** Never drink or cook with water directly from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve lead from pipes and other substances that build up in the water heater. Boiling does not remove lead but can actually increase its concentration. Households with children under the age of six, or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, should consider using bottled water or filtered tap water for formula, concentrated juices, cooking and drinking.
3. **Remove the screen and aerator from faucets, rinse out any debris, and re-attach.** Do this once a month. This will reduce the possibility that small particles that may contain lead could build up at your faucet.

Lead Service Lines and Drinking Water
Best Management Practices

Other steps to consider:

- Purchase a home filtration system. Home drinking water filtration systems or pour-through filters can reduce or eliminate lead. Look for products certified by NSF/ANSI under Standard 53 for removal of lead and follow manufacturer's guidelines on installation and maintenance.
- Replace your lead service line or interior plumbing. A licensed plumber can help you assess the cost and feasibility of replacing your lead service line or interior plumbing. If you decide to do this, please call your local water utility for more information.
- Have your water tested for lead. Please consult the WDNR's website for accredited laboratories at: dnr.wi.gov/topic/labCert/certified-lab-lists.
- All children should be screened for lead poisoning, particularly if they live in a home built before 1978 with recent or ongoing renovation or if they have a sibling or playmate who has lead poisoning.