

## IF LEAD IS FOUND IN YOUR WATER

The steps described in this brochure will reduce the lead concentrations in your drinking water. However, if a water test indicates that the drinking water coming from your tap contains lead concentrations in excess of 15 ppb after flushing, then you may want to consider installing a home treatment device.

Home treatment devices are limited in that each unit treats only the water that flows from the faucet to which it is connected, and all of the devices require periodic maintenance and replacement. Devices such as reverse osmosis systems or distillers can effectively remove lead from your drinking water. Some activated carbon filters may reduce lead levels at the tap; however, all lead reduction claims should be investigated. Be sure to check the actual performance of a specific home treatment device before and after installing the unit.

It should be noted that water softeners have little to no effect on reducing lead in tap water.

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

For more information about our community's water supply, call our Water Quality Assurance Lab at **(614) 645-7691** from 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects of lead. Or you may call Columbus Public Health at **(614) 724-6000**.

Your local municipality that issues building permits can provide records that should contain the names of plumbing contractors that plumbed your home. City of Columbus residents contact **(614) 645-7314** (Building and Development Services).

Telephone numbers of communities served by the Columbus water system may be obtained by calling the 311 Call Center. Just dial **3-1-1** or **645-3111**. The 311 Call Center is the single point of contact for requesting all non-emergency city services.

For more information about drinking water quality and monitoring, including common water quality concerns, visit [www.columbus.gov/drinkingwater/](http://www.columbus.gov/drinkingwater/).

## STATE APPROVED WATER TESTING LABORATORIES FOR LEAD:

Alloway	(800) 783-5991
American Analytical	(330) 535-1300
MASI Laboratory	(614) 873-4654
Montgomery County Enviro	(937) 781-3016

Check the Ohio EPA's list online at:  
<http://www.epa.state.oh.us/ddagw/labcert.aspx>

## THE CITY OF COLUMBUS

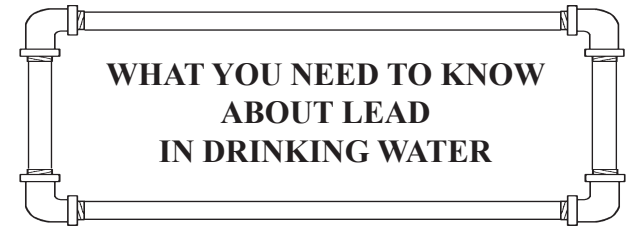
### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

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[www.columbus.gov/utilities/](http://www.columbus.gov/utilities/)

Additional information about lead in the home can be found online at Columbus Public Health ([www.columbus.gov/publichealth](http://www.columbus.gov/publichealth)) or the Ohio EPA ([www.epa.state.oh.us](http://www.epa.state.oh.us)).



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the City of Columbus, Department of Public Utilities, Division of Water want you to know about lead in your drinking water. We have provided this brochure to explain the simple steps you can take to reduce your exposure to lead in the tap water. Please read it carefully.

The USEPA action level (AL) for lead is 15 parts per billion (ppb). An AL is the concentration of a contaminant, which if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements that a water system must follow. The USEPA has also established maximum contaminant level goals (MCLG) for lead at 0 ppb. An MCLG is the level of contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected health risk. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety.

The lead concentration in the drinking water leaving our water treatment plants is below the level of detection. However, lead can enter the water from household brass fixtures, lead pipes or lead solder when water resides in plumbing for more than 6 hours. Under these conditions, testing has shown that lead levels can exceed the USEPA action level of 15 ppb in some homes. Most homes in the Columbus area do not have lead service lines and have little to no detectable levels of lead in their tap water.

To meet federal USEPA regulations, we have a treatment program in place that includes state-of-the-art corrosion control measures and source water treatment. We also have a public education program to inform the public about lead in drinking water. Drinking water accounts for a very small percentage of lead exposure. Lead-based paints, industrial emissions and lead contaminated dust are environmental sources of lead that pose a much greater risk.

**THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF EXPOSURE TO LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER IS TO FLUSH COLD WATER FAUCETS USED FOR DRINKING AND COOKING FOR AT LEAST 30 SECONDS IF THE WATER HAS NOT BEEN USED FOR OVER 6 HOURS.**

## HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEAD

Lead is a common, natural and often useful metal found throughout the environment in lead-based paint, air, soil, household dust, food, drinking water, and certain types of pottery, porcelain and pewter. Lead can pose a significant risk to your health if too much of it enters your body.

When lead builds up in the body it can cause damage to the brain, red blood cells and kidneys. The greatest risk is to young children and pregnant women. Amounts of lead that will not hurt adults can slow the normal mental and physical development of children. In addition, a child at play often comes into contact with sources of lead contamination - like dirt, dust or paint chips. It is important to wash children's hands often and to try to make sure they only put food in their mouths.

## LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

Although rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning, high levels of lead in drinking water can significantly increase a person's total lead exposure, particularly the exposure of infants who drink baby formulas and concentrated juices that are mixed with water. Although most lead exposure, especially in children, occurs when paint chips are ingested, dust inhaled or absorbed from contaminated soil, the U.S. EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 10 to 20% of a person's total exposure to lead.

Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminants in that it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like rivers and lakes. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of the corrosion, or wearing away, of materials containing lead that are in the water distribution system and household plumbing. When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems containing lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap could contain higher levels of lead.

At the Columbus Division of Water, we care about the health and welfare of you and your family and take all necessary steps to reduce your exposure to lead from drinking water. If you have any questions about how we are carrying out the requirements of the lead regulation, please call us: **(614) 645-7691**.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE YOUR EXPOSURE TO LEAD:



### FLUSH YOUR TAP

Always let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than 6 hours. The longer water sits in your home's plumbing, the more lead it may contain. Flushing the tap means running the cold water faucet until the water gets noticeably colder; at least 30 seconds. To save water, you can use the "first" water for dishwashing or watering plants and keep a container of "flushed" water in your refrigerator.

If your house has a lead service line to the water main, you may have to flush the water for a longer time, perhaps 2 - 3 minutes, before drinking or cooking. Although toilet flushing or showering flushes water through a portion of your home's plumbing system, you still need to flush the water in each faucet before using it for drinking or cooking.

If you live in a high-rise building, letting the water flow before using it may not work to lessen your risk from lead. The plumbing systems have more, sometimes larger, pipes than smaller buildings. Ask your landlord for help in locating any sources of the lead and for advice on reducing the lead level.



### USE COLD WATER FOR COOKING

Try not to cook with or drink water from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve more lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold tap and heat it on the stove. Do not boil water to remove lead. Boiling water will not reduce lead and may actually increase the concentration due to evaporation.



### CHECK HOME PLUMBING

Remove loose lead solder and debris from the plumbing materials installed in newly constructed homes, or homes in which the plumbing has recently been replaced, by removing the faucet strainers from all taps and running the water for 3 - 5 minutes. Thereafter, periodically remove the strainers and flush out any debris that has accumulated over time. In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing more than 0.2% lead, and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes and other plumbing materials to 8.0%. If your copper

pipes are joined with lead solder that has been installed illegally since it was banned in 1986, notify the plumber who did the work and request that he or she replace the lead solder with lead-free solder. Lead solder looks dull gray and when scratched with a key looks shiny. In addition, notify the Ohio EPA at **(614) 728-3778** or **(800) 686-2330** about the violation.



### CHECK YOUR SERVICE LINE

The best way to determine if your service line is made of lead is by either hiring a licensed plumber to inspect the line or by contacting the plumbing contractor who installed the line. You can identify the plumbing contractor by checking the city's record of building permits, which should be maintained in the files of your local municipality. A licensed plumber can at the same time check to see if your home's plumbing contains lead solder, lead pipes or pipe fittings that contain lead.

The Division of Water also maintains records of the materials located in the distribution system. Should you choose to replace your portion of your service line, we will provide you with information. Acceptable pipe replacement materials in the Columbus water system are Type K copper and approved polyethylene plastic. Call **(614) 645-7677** for details.



### CHECK HOME WIRING

Have an electrician check your wiring. If grounding wires from the electrical system are attached to your pipes, corrosion may be greater. Check with a 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.



### HAVE YOUR WATER TESTED

The steps described in this brochure will help to reduce the lead concentrations in your drinking water. However, to find out whether you need to take action in your own home, you can have your drinking water tested to determine if it contains excessive concentrations of lead (more than 15 ppb). Some local laboratories that can provide this service are listed on the back of this brochure.