

Lead in Drinking Water and Household Plumbing

How to reduce exposure to lead

Twice each year the Portland Water Bureau monitors for lead and copper in tap water from more than 100 homes. These are homes where the plumbing is known to contain lead solder and represent a worst-case scenario for lead in water.

Important Information About Lead in Your Drinking Water

The Portland Water Bureau found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Please read this information closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.



Health Effects of Lead

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 the 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.



Sources of Lead

Lead is commonly found in a variety of places throughout our environment. Lead is rarely found in Portland's source waters, and there are no known lead service lines in the distribution system. The main source of lead in water in the Portland area is household plumbing. Lead solder was commonly used in homes built or plumbed with copper pipes before 1985. Lead can also be found in brass plumbing fixtures and components. When corrosive water stands in plumbing systems that contain lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into drinking water. Water that has been sitting in household pipes that contain lead for several hours, such as in the morning, or after returning from work or school, is most likely to contain lead.

In Portland, the most common sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint, household dust, soil and plumbing materials. Lead is also found in other household objects such as toys, cosmetics and pottery.

To reduce your exposure to lead from drinking water, the Portland Water Bureau encourages you to follow these easy steps:

- 1 Run your water to flush the lead out.** If the water has not been used for several hours, run each tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes or until it becomes colder before drinking or cooking.
- 2 Use cold, fresh water for cooking and preparing baby formula.** Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water tap; lead dissolves more easily into hot water. Do not use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula.
- 3 Do not boil water to remove lead.** Boiling water will not reduce lead.
- 4 Consider using a filter.** Check whether it reduces lead – not all filters do. Be sure to maintain and replace a filter device in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions to protect water quality. Contact NSF International at **800-NSF-8010** or **www.nsf.org** for information on performance standards for water filters.
- 5 Test your child for lead.** Ask your physician or call the **LeadLine** at **503-988-4000** to find out how to have your child tested for lead. A blood lead level test is the only way to know if your child is being exposed to lead.
- 6 Test your water for lead.** Call the **LeadLine** at **503-988-4000** to find out how to get a **FREE** lead-in-water test.
- 7 Regularly clean your faucet aerator.** Particles containing lead from solder or household plumbing can become trapped in your faucet aerator. Regularly cleaning every few months will remove these particles and reduce your exposure to lead.
- 8 Consider buying low-lead fixtures.** As of January, 2014 all pipes, fittings and fixtures are required to contain less than 0.25% lead. When buying new fixtures, consumers should seek out those with the lowest lead content.

The Portland Water Bureau takes steps to reduce corrosion of lead in plumbing by increasing the pH of the water. This pH adjustment can reduce the presence of lead in tap water by more than half.

In addition to reducing lead exposure in drinking water, the Portland Water Bureau supports programs to reduce all sources of exposure to lead. In Portland, dust from paint in homes built before 1978 is the most common source of exposure to lead.



Testing Your Water For Lead

The Portland Water Bureau provides **FREE** lead-in-water test kits to its customers. To order your lead-in-water test kit, please contact the Multnomah County Health Department **LeadLine**: **www.leadline.org • 503-988-4000**

The LeadLine also provides information about all lead hazards, including:

- Ways to reduce your exposure to all sources of lead
- **FREE** childhood blood lead level testing
- Lead poisoning prevention workshops
- Programs to reduce lead hazards in eligible homes

The Portland Water Bureau supports these programs and the LeadLine.

For more information, call us at **503-823-7525**, or visit our web site at **www.portlandoregon.gov/water**. For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, contact the **LeadLine** at **503-988-4000**, visit their web site at **www.leadline.org**, visit EPA's web site at **www.epa.gov/lead** or contact your health care provider.

Si tiene preguntas acerca de este material o acerca de los peligros causados por el plomo, por favor llame a la **LeadLine** al **503-988-4000**.

Если у Вас возникли вопросы по поводу этих материалов или опасности, связанной со свинцом, пожалуйста, позвоните по телефону горячей линии **LeadLine 503-988-4000**.

Nếu quý vị có thắc mắc gì về tài liệu này hoặc về các mối nguy hiểm của chì, vui lòng liên hệ đường dây **LeadLine, 503-988-4000**.

如果您对这种材料或铅物质的危险有何问题, 请拨 **503-988-4000** 与 **LeadLine** 联系。



Portland Water Bureau
1120 SW Fifth Avenue, Room 600
Portland, OR 97204

Nick Fish, Commissioner
David G. Shaff, Administrator

Customer Service: 503-823-7770
Portland Water Bureau Water Line: 503-823-7525
TTY: 503-823-6868
www.portlandoregon.gov/water

To help ensure equal access to City programs, services, and activities, the City of Portland will provide translation, reasonably modify policies/procedures and provide auxiliary aids/services/alternative formats to persons with disabilities. For accommodations, translations and interpretations, complaints, and additional information, contact 503-823-7525, use City TTY 503-823-6868, or use Oregon Relay Service: 711