



Tarrant County Public Health

A healthier community through leadership in health strategy

The Facts About Lead

What is lead?

Lead is a naturally occurring metal that is harmful if inhaled or swallowed. Lead can be found in air, soil, dust, food, and water.

How can I be exposed to lead?

The most common source of lead exposure is from paint in homes and buildings built before 1978. Lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust are the main sources of exposure for lead in U.S. children. Lead-based paints were banned for use in housing in 1978. Lead also can be found in some household plumbing materials and some water service lines.

What are the risks of lead exposure?

Lead can cause a variety of adverse health effects, including increases in the blood pressure of some adults; delays in normal physical and mental development in babies and young children; and, deficits in the attention span, hearing, and learning abilities of children.

How does lead get into my drinking water?

Lead is rarely found naturally in our source water or in the treated water flowing through the distribution system. More commonly, lead leaches into water over time through corrosion—a dissolving or wearing of metal caused by a chemical reaction between water and your plumbing. Lead can leach into water from pipes, solder, fixtures, faucets (brass) and fittings. The amount of lead in your water depends on the types and amounts of minerals in the water, how long the water stays in the pipes, the water's corrosivity and water temperature.

How will I know if my drinking water has lead in it?

You can have your water tested for lead. Since 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. A list of certified laboratories is available on the TCEQ website. Contact labs directly for information on cost and sampling bottles.

Is my home at risk for lead plumbing?

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency defines high-risk homes as follows:

- Homes with a lead service line that connects the water main to your home's internal plumbing;
- Homes with copper pipe and lead solder built after 1982 and before 1988; and
- Homes with lead pipes.

In 1986, Congress enacted the "lead ban". As a result, homes built in or after 1988 are far less likely to have lead solder.

SEE OTHER SIDE

How can I reduce my exposure to lead in my drinking water?

There are many steps you can take to reduce your exposure to lead in drinking water, but if you have lead service lines as part of your private plumbing, the best step you can take is to have them replaced. In addition:

- **Run your water to flush out lead.** If it hasn't been used for several hours, run the water for two to five minutes to clear most of the lead from the water. To conserve water, remember to catch the flushed tap water for plants or some other household use such as cleaning.
- **Always use cold water for drinking, cooking, and preparing baby formula.** Never cook with or drink water from the hot water tap. Never use water from the hot water tap to make formula.
- **Do not boil water to remove lead.** Boiling water will not reduce lead.
- **Periodically remove and clean the faucet screen/aerator.** While removed, run the water to eliminate debris.
- **You may consider investing in a home water treatment device or alternative water source.** When purchasing a water treatment device, make sure it is certified under NSF/ANSI 53 to remove lead. Search for certified products at NSF International (800-NSF-8010) or Water Quality Association (630-505-0160).
- **Identify and replace plumbing fixtures containing lead.** Brass faucets, fittings and valves may leach lead into drinking water. Products sold after Jan. 4, 2014, must by law contain very low levels of lead.
- **Have a licensed electrician check your wiring.** Your home electrical system may be attached to your service line or elsewhere in your plumbing. If this connection is electrified, it can accelerate corrosion. Check with a licensed electrician to correct ground faults and evaluate your local electric code to determine if your wiring can be grounded elsewhere. DO NOT attempt to change the wiring yourself because improper bonding or grounding can cause electrical shock and fire hazards.

Should I test my children for exposure to lead?

Children at risk of exposure to lead should be tested. Your doctor or local health center can perform a simple blood test to determine your child's blood-lead level. You can also talk to your doctor about reducing your family's exposure to lead.

For more information, call the National Lead Information Center:

1-800-424-LEAD (or visit: www.epa.gov/lead)



Tarrant County Public Health
A Nationally Accredited Health Department

