



Lead is in the news, but is it in your drinking water?

PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH

The Regional Water Authority's (RWA) first job is to protect the families we serve. Those of us involved in managing, cleaning and delivering water share a solemn obligation to protect public health. The Connecticut Department of Public Health (CTDPH) is the regulatory agency for drinking water in our state, and they provide strong oversight to their partners, including the Regional Water Authority (RWA). They make sure we are providing our consumers with the highest quality water possible.

The RWA takes its obligation to protect your health seriously. Here are some questions and answers that will help put you at ease. At the end of the page, there are links to several other sites that discuss lead in drinking water.

HOW CAN LEAD GET INTO MY DRINKING WATER?

The water that leaves the Regional Water Authority's (RWA) water treatment plants and travels through water mains to homes or businesses has no lead in it. But as water sits in plumbing systems, small amounts of lead from lead pipes or lead solder used to join copper pipes can dissolve into the water.

IS MY HOME AT RISK OF HAVING LEAD IN THE WATER?

Prior to 1991, the RWA replaced all known RWA-owned lead service lines in our system. The RWA owns the water service line from the water main in the street to the curb; the customer owns the water service line from the curb into their home.

The RWA's experience is that the use of lead water service lines is associated with homes built prior to 1920, although we cannot rule out its use at later dates. Homes built before 1988, when the Lead Contamination Control Act went into effect, might contain lead in brass plumbing fixtures, or lead solder that was used to connect copper pipes. Homes built in or after 1988 are far less likely to have plumbing fixtures or solder that contain lead.

HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE LEAD PLUMBING OR LEAD SERVICE LINES?

Lead plumbing pipes are generally a dull gray color and are very soft. If you carefully scratch a pipe with a key or coin, the scratched area on a lead pipe will turn a bright silver color. To avoid putting a hole in the pipe, do not use a knife or other sharp instrument to scratch the pipe. Galvanized piping can also be dull gray in color. A strong magnet will typically cling to galvanized pipes, but will not cling to lead pipes. In some homes, copper or galvanized pipes were connected using lead solder. These connections have a characteristic solder bulb or bubble.

Discovering if the portion of the water service line you own is lead is more difficult. You cannot taste, smell, or see lead in water. If you cannot access a service line to determine whether it contains lead, the only way to tell if there is a lead service line is to have the water tested by a certified laboratory. The Connecticut Department of

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Public Health (CTDPH) has a list of certified laboratories, including the Regional Water Authority's lab, on its website (the address is below).

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE A LEAD SERVICE LINE?

If you find you have a lead service line, contact the Regional Water Authority (203-562-4020). We will work with you to replace the line at the cost of materials and labor. If you don't want to replace the lead service line, we will monitor lead levels in your home for up to six months and show you simple things you can do to reduce your exposure to lead in tap water.



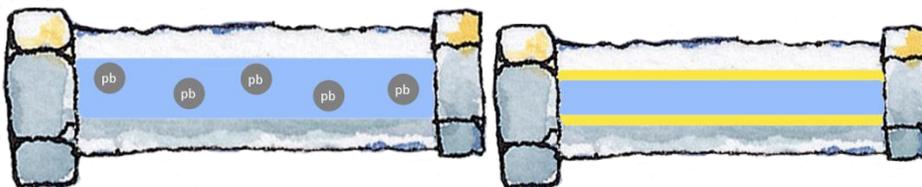
IS MONITORING LEAD FOR SIX MONTHS ENOUGH?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires water producers to adjust the water chemistry during the treatment process to prevent lead and copper from leaching into drinking water from the tap. During the treatment process, the RWA adds chemicals that create a protective coating inside service lines and household plumbing to stop lead or copper from leaching into tap water. That coating protects the pipe. Typically, the amount of lead in water, even with lead service lines or lead solder, doesn't change over time unless something disrupts the coating in the pipes. When we see spikes in lead at a customer's home, it usually is because the customer changed a plumbing fixture.

WHAT THE RWA DOES

To prevent lead from leaching into drinking water, the RWA:

- Replaced all known RWA-owned lead service lines prior to 1991.
- Maintains the series of reservoirs and aquifers in South Central Connecticut that are the sources of water in the area.
- If a homeowner's lead service line is discovered during routine or emergency repairs, the RWA works with the homeowner to replace a customer-owned lead service line at the cost of labor and materials.
- Treats the water with chemicals that reduces the corrosiveness of the water and builds up a protective coating inside the pipes. The chemicals and coating can reduce the amount of lead dissolving into water. This treatment began in the 1980s and is still in use today.



- Tests water bi-weekly from its treatment plants to ensure the water is not corrosive. We also test the water in the distribution system quarterly to ensure it is in compliance with state and federal water quality regulations.
- Routinely tests for lead in water drawn from homes throughout our system in accordance with EPA criteria. Even after sitting in household plumbing overnight, 95 percent of the water samples meet state

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and federal standards. After flushing the building's water lines, 100 percent of the samples meet the standards.

- Follows the Environmental Protection Agency's rules for frequency of water testing. If nothing changes with service lines or household plumbing, the amount of lead in drinking water typically does not change over time. The few times we have discovered lead in a customer's water, it has been traced back to changes in the home's plumbing, typically as a result of installing new brass or chrome-plated brass faucets.
- Provides customers annual water quality information, including compliance with the EPA Lead and Copper Rule, through its annual water quality report which customers will receive by mail before the end of June. The report covers the previous calendar year.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

There are several steps you can take to address potential risks from lead in water.

- Lead service lines are typically only present in older homes, but brass faucets with lead content can be in newer homes. A certified plumber can tell for sure if someone has a lead service line, check for lead solders in internal pipes, and look for fixtures containing lead. If a customer's home has a lead service line, they can contact the RWA about working together to replace it.
- Anytime water has sat idle in a pipe for six or more hours, flush the "old water" out of the plumbing by running the water for a few minutes. Let the water run until it is as cold as it gets before using it for cooking or drinking. To avoid wasting water, flush out the "old water" by taking a shower, flushing the toilet, washing a load of clothes, etc. In the morning, take this two-step approach:
 - Wait to make coffee, juice, hot cereal or baby formula until family members are out of the bathroom.
 - Run the kitchen faucet until the water is really cold (it should only take a few seconds).
- Periodically remove faucet strainers and rinse them to remove any debris.
- Not all home treatment devices can remove lead in water. 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 (www.nsf.org/consumer-resources) or Water Quality Association (www.wqa.org).
- Always use cold water for cooking and drinking, especially when you are mixing formula, drinks, or food for kids. Never use the hot water tap to make food, instant coffee, tea, instant soup, cocoa or any other beverage. Do not use the hot water tap to draw water for cooking. Lead leaches more easily into hot water than cold water.
- The only way to know with certainty if you have lead at the tap is to have your water tested by a certified laboratory. If you are concerned that your family is at risk, the link to a list of certified laboratories in Connecticut is below. The Regional Water Authority laboratory is included in that list and offers a test for lead for \$25. Home test kits are also available, but we cannot attest to their accuracy.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Connecticut Department of Public Health – Lead Fact Sheet:
http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/drinking_water/pdf/lead.pdf
- Connecticut Department of Public Health – Certified Laboratories:
http://www..ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/environmental_health/environmental_laboratories/pdf/InstateLaboratoriesCertifiedtoTest_DrinkingWater.pdf
- Environmental Protection Agency:
<http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lead>
Safe Drinking Water Hotline: 1-800-426-4791
- American Water Works Association:
<http://www.drinktap.org>
- American Association of Pediatrics:
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Lead-in-Tap-Water-Household-Plumbing.aspx>