



Genesee County Health Department

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How does lead get into my tap water?

Under typical circumstances, lead will dissolve into the water. The concentration of lead in drinking water can vary greatly, depending on the corrosiveness of the water, the type and age of the plumbing materials and the length of time that the water stands in the pipes. The highest levels of lead occur when very corrosive water stands motionless in lead or lead soldered pipe for long periods of time.

How do I know if my tap water is contaminated with lead?

The only way to know whether your tap water contains lead is to have it tested. You cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. There are different sampling methods for sampling lead in drinking water. To determine your household risk, it is recommended to take a first draw sample.

Does lead in my tap water cause health effects?

Lead 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 won't hurt adults can slow down normal mental and physical development of growing bodies. Lead in water can be a special problem for infants, whose diets may be mostly liquids, such as baby formulas or concentrated juices mixed with water. Smaller bodies can absorb lead more rapidly than bigger ones. A child's mental and physical growth can be permanently harmed by too much lead. Risk will vary, depending on the individual, the circumstances, and the amount of water consumed.

What can I do to reduce or eliminate lead in my tap water?

Flush your cold-water pipes by running the water for approximately 5 minutes. The longer the water has been sitting in the pipes, the more lead it may contain. You can fill containers for later use, after the flushing process. Use only water from the cold-water tap for drinking, cooking, and especially for making baby formula. Hot water is likely to contain higher levels because it dissolves more lead.

You may choose to install a water filter that is NSF-certified for lead removal. If a water filter is installed, replace filters at least as often as recommended by the manufacturer.

Buy a lead-free faucet. The legal definition of "lead-free" still allows brass faucets to contain up to 8 percent lead. However, faucets marked with "NSF 61/9" and/or "California Proposition 65" meet stricter limits. Regularly clean particles from faucet aerators.

Is it safe to take a bath or shower, if my water has high lead levels?

Yes. Bathing and showering should be safe for you and your children, even if the water contains lead over EPA's action level. Human skin does not absorb lead in water. This information applies to most situations and to a large majority of the population, but individual circumstances may vary. Some situations, such as cases involving highly corrosive water, may require additional recommendations or more stringent actions.

Who do I contact for more information?

The local water authority is always your first source for testing and identifying lead contamination in your tap water. You can visit the City of Flint Website at www.cityofflint.com or contact the Flint Water Department at 810-787-6537.

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