

**PLYMOUTH WATER DEPARTMENT
11 Lincoln Street
Plymouth, Ma 02360 508 830-4155**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Plymouth Water Department are concerned about lead in your drinking water. Although most homes have very low levels of lead in their drinking water, some have lead levels above the EPA action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb) or 0.015 milligrams per liter (mg/L).

WHAT IS LEAD?

Lead is a metal found throughout the environment. Lead was a paint and gasoline additive for many years. Lead was also used in solder for home plumbing and in making brass alloys for plumbing fixtures.

LEAD IS EVERYWHERE.

Whether you live in an apartment or a single family home, in an old or new neighborhood, lead is in your environment. It can be found in lead-based paint, soil, household dust, food, drinking water, pottery, porcelain, pewter and certain paper used for magazines and gift wrap. Most cases of lead contamination are from contact with peeling lead paint. While lead in drinking water is rarely the single cause of lead contamination, it can increase a person's total body lead level. In addition, a child at play often comes into contact with sources of lead contamination – like dirt and dust – that rarely affect an adult. It is important to wash children's hands and toys often, and to try to make sure they only put food in their mouths.

WHY IS LEAD DANGEROUS?

Lead is toxic. Lead is stored in the body for many years. Excessive amounts of lead in the body can cause damage to the brain, kidneys and liver. The greatest risk is to young children and pregnant women, whose fetuses can be harmed by lead.

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER.

Sampling and testing results have shown that there is no lead in the Town's drinking water sources (ground water supply wells). In general, the major sources of lead found in public drinking water originate from lead water service pipes that connect houses to water mains in the street, lead based solder used to join water pipes and chrome plated or brass faucets.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN DRINKING WATER?

The Plymouth Water Department has informational bulletins regarding lead in drinking water. In addition, the Department may be able to tell you whether your water service pipes are made of lead. If you are interested in having your water tested for lead, you can call the Department of Environmental Protection at (508) 946 2700 for a list of state certified laboratories that can test your drinking water for lead.

Steps You Can Take in the Home to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water.

Despite our best efforts mentioned earlier to control water corrosivity and remove lead from the water supply, lead levels in some homes or buildings can be high. To find out whether you need to take action in your own home, have your drinking water tested to determine if it contains excessive concentrations of lead. Testing the water is essential because you cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. Some local laboratories that can provide this service are listed at the end of this bulletin. For more information on having your water tested, please call the Water Department at 508 830 4155.

Precautions you should take if a water test indicates that the drinking water drawn from a tap in your home contains lead above 15 ppb:

1. 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 six hours. The longer water resides 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, usually about 15-30 seconds. If your house has a lead service line to the water main, you may have to flush the water for a longer time, perhaps one minute, before drinking. 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. Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your family's health. It usually uses less than one or two gallons of water and costs less than (insert a cost estimate based on flushing two times a day for 30 days) per month. To conserve water, fill a couple of bottles for drinking water after flushing the tap, and whenever possible use the first flush water to wash the dishes or water the plants. 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, and sometimes larger pipes than smaller buildings. Ask your landlord for help in locating the source of the lead and for advice on reducing the lead level.
2. 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.
3. 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 from three to five minutes. Thereafter, periodically remove the strainers and flush out any debris that has accumulated over time.
4. 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 Department of Environmental Protection about the violation. Determine whether or not the service line that connects your home or apartment to the water main is made of lead. 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 the (insert name of department that issues building permits). 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 public water system that delivers water to your home should also maintain records of the materials located in the distribution system. If the service line that connects your dwelling to the water main contributes more than 15 ppb to drinking water, after our comprehensive treatment program is in place, we are required to replace the line. If the line is only partially owned by the (insert name of the city, county, or water system that owns the line), we are required to provide the owner of the privately owned portion of the line with information on how to replace the privately owned portion of the service line, and offer to replace that portion of the line at the owner's expense. If we replace only a portion of the line that we own we are also required to notify the owner in advance and provide the owner with the information on the steps the owner can take to minimize exposure

to any temporary increase in lead levels that may result from the partial replacement, to take a follow-up sample at our expense from the line within 72 hours after the partial replacement, and to mail or otherwise provide the owner with the results of that sample within three business days of receiving the results. Acceptable replacement alternatives include copper, steel, iron, and plastic pipes.

5. 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.

The steps described above 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, or after we have completed our actions to minimize lead levels, then you may want to take the following additional measures:

1. Purchase or lease 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.
2. Purchase bottled water for drinking and cooking.

You can consult a variety of sources for additional information. Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects of lead. Department and local government agencies that can be contacted include:

1. The Plymouth Water Department can provide you with information about your community's water supply, and a list of local laboratories that have been certified by EPA for testing water quality;
2. The Building Department (508) 830-4032 can provide you with information about building permit records that should contain the names of plumbing contractors that plumbed your home; and
3. The Plymouth Health Department (508) 830-4090 and the Massachusetts Public Health Department (617) 522-3700 can provide you with information about the health effects of lead and how you can have your child's blood tested.
4. The following is a list of some Department approved laboratories in your area that you can call to have your water tested for lead.:

Envirotech Labs.
8 Jan Sebastian Dr.
Sandwich, MA 02563
(508) 888-6460

Groundwater Analytical
228 Main Street
Buzzards Bay, MA 02532
(508) 759-4441

To be delivered to:

Schools
Daycare
Hospitals
Health Clinics & Pediatricians
Board of Health