

EWG'S TOP TIPS ON LEAD IN WATER



Lead contamination in drinking water poses a serious risk to the health of communities across the country. This is especially true for children, because **there is no “safe” level of lead exposure for kids**—even low levels can affect brain development and impair learning. In adults, increased blood lead levels are linked to higher blood pressure, higher cholesterol levels and **an estimated 400,000 cardiovascular-disease-linked deaths a year.**

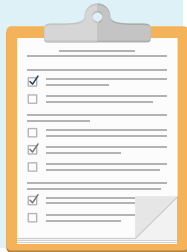
Why might lead be in our drinking water?

Pipes made of lead were once used in thousands of communities, mostly in water lines built before the 1950s. Lead continued to be used in faucets, valves, fittings and solders until 1986. Water treatment chemicals can minimize the leaching of lead from water pipes, but **the only permanent solution is the complete removal of galvanized iron and lead pipes and fittings, such as lead goosenecks.**

How do I know if I have lead water lines?

Figure out when your home and the water line on your property were built.

If the answer to both is *after* 1988, you most likely **do not** have a lead service line or fittings.

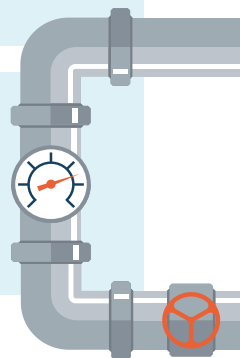


Ask your utility provider about lead.

Find out if any portion of your water line or the water utility main line is lead. Ask whether the utility has maps showing the location of lead lines and how the utility plans to notify you if it undertakes lead line or fittings replacements. Make sure to ask how certain they are about the information they're giving you.

Check the pipe entering your house.

In some homes, you may be able to see the water service line at the point where it enters your home, below the main shutoff valve. If you're having trouble, try using [NPR's interactive tool](#) to find your water line. If the water service line is accessible, gently scratch the pipe with a coin. If the pipe is silver-colored, soft and easily scraped, and a magnet doesn't stick to it, **it is lead.**



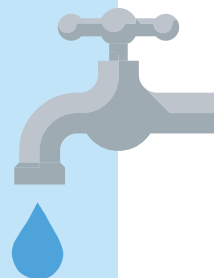
What can I do if I have lead service lines or fittings?

Contact your utility to find out whether it's planning a lead line replacement and the status of your water line.

Make sure to ask whether the utility will also replace the pipe that connects your home to the main line. Ownership varies by community, but in many instances, you may be responsible for replacing your own water line. Make sure that's done in conjunction with replacement of the utility-owned lead line. Otherwise, you will only replace part of the lead line and could inadvertently wind up increasing the lead levels in your water for many months.

Replace old faucets and plumbing.

Inside your home, lead may contaminate any faucets, valves, fittings and solders made before 1986. They should be replaced.



Urge your legislators to take action.

Contact your local and federal officials to urge them to take action to replace lead pipes and provide your community with lead-certified filters.



Filter your water before, during and after lead line replacement.

Replacing lead service lines can temporarily increase lead levels, so for up to 18 months after replacement, it's important to continue using a water filter certified to remove lead, especially for water given to young children or used in infant formula. [EWG's Water Filter Guide](#) can help you find the right filter for you.