WHAT IS LEAD?

- Lead is a toxic 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 greatest exposure to lead is swallowing or breathing in lead paint chips and dust.
- Lead also can be found in some household plumbing materials and water service lines.

WHO IS AT RISK?

- Children ages 6 and under are at the greatest risk. Pregnant women and nursing mothers should avoid exposure to lead to protect their children.
- Exposure to lead can result in delays in physical and mental development.

Your child is also at risk if:

- your home or a home that your child spends a lot of time in was built before lead paint was banned in 1978.
- renovation work is being done in such a home.
- the adults in the home work with lead.

HOTLINES & INFORMATION

EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline:
800-426-4791

National Lead Information Center:
800-424-LEAD
www.epa.gov/lead

NSF International:
www.nsf.org

Lead in Drinking Water Web Site:
www.epa.gov/safewater/lead

Additional Information:

Read the annual report you get from your water utility to find out about how they are working to reduce levels of lead in drinking water and other information about your drinking water. Call them if you have any questions.

Contact your local public health department or talk to your doctor about reducing your family's exposure to lead.

Office of Water (4606 M)
EPA 816-F-05-001
February 2005

Printed on Recycled Paper

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

IS THERE LEAD IN MY DRINKING WATER?

You can reduce the risk of lead exposure from drinking water in your home.

Tips For Protecting Your Family's Health

HOW DOES LEAD GET INTO WATER?

Lead enters the water ("leaches") through contact with the plumbing.

Lead leaches into water through:

- Corrosion* of
  - Pipes
  - Solder
  - Fixtures and Faucets (brass)
  - Fittings

*Corrosion is a dissolving or wearing away of metal caused by a chemical reaction between water and your plumbing.

The amount of lead in your water also depends on the types and amounts of minerals in the water, how long the water stays in the pipes, the amount of wear in the pipes, the water's acidity and its temperature.

HEALTH TIP

To help block the storage of lead in your child's body, serve your family meals that are low in fat and high in calcium and iron, including dairy products and green vegetables.

What should I do if I suspect that my water contains high lead levels?

- If you want to know if your home's drinking water contains unsafe levels of lead, have your water tested.

- Testing is the only way to confirm if lead is present or absent.

- Most water systems test for lead as a regular part of water monitoring. These tests give a system-wide picture and do not reflect conditions at a specific drinking water outlet.

- For more information on testing your water, call EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800-426-4791.

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.

- If your child has a blood lead level at or above 10ug/dl, should take preventive measures.

QUICK TIPS TO REDUCE YOUR FAMILY'S EXPOSURE TO LEAD

Boiling your water will not get rid of lead.

- Use cold water for drinking or cooking. Never cook or mix infant formula using hot water from the tap.

- Make it a practice to **run the water at each tap** before use.

- Do not consume water that has sat in your home's plumbing for more than six hours. First, make sure to **run the water** until you feel the temperature change before cooking, drinking, or brushing your teeth, unless otherwise instructed by your utility.

- Some faucet and pitcher filters can remove lead from drinking water. If you use a filter, be sure you get one that is certified to remove lead by the NSF International.