



**How does lead get into water systems?**

Lead enters water systems mainly through corrosion in:

1. Lead full or partial service lines (that connect some properties to the water mains)
2. Interior lead pipe
3. Interior galvanized pipe (especially if there was, or is, a full or partial lead service line)
4. Interior copper pipe with lead soldered joints (installed prior to 1988)
5. Interior plumbing fixtures (purchased or installed prior to January 2014 before the effective date of new definition of “lead-free”)

**Why should I be concerned about lead?**

Lead is a neurotoxin that can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has indicated that no safe blood lead level in children has been identified. Even low levels of lead in blood have been shown to affect IQ, ability to pay attention, academic achievement, and criminal behavior. Young children are particularly vulnerable as they tend to put things in their mouths and lead paint chips, or dust, found in houses built before 1978 are therefore a risk. Lead in water is another route for lead exposure due to lead pipes, solder and fittings as are certain toys, candy and jewelry. However, lead exposure is preventable, and lead-free children and lead-safe homes are possible.

**How do I know if there is lead in my water?**

Aging infrastructure still contains lead pipes (either owned by the water system, or by the customer) as well as solder and fittings containing lead. These pipes can contribute to lead in drinking water. If you have lead pipes, you can test your water for lead after it has been resting in pipes for 6-8 hours. However, since the lead in water may be variable, we advise families to utilize simple solutions such as: running cold water from their main drinking and cooking tap as directed by the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm>) and using NSF filters or bottled water especially where infant formula is concerned or for pregnant women.

**Where else would I come into contact with lead?**

Over the last few decades, the United States has made tremendous progress in reducing sources of lead exposure in the environment resulting in lower childhood blood levels. Lead has been eliminated from gasoline, paint and solder. However, people can be exposed to lead from multiple sources: dust containing lead from pre-1978 paint, paint chips, contaminated soils, and water. The majority of houses in Allegheny County were built before lead was removed from paint and water lines. Other sources of lead exposure include some toys, ceramics, candy and jewelry. Wash your children’s hands and toys as often as possible, as they come into contact with dirt and dust containing lead.



### **What should I do if I am concerned about lead in my drinking water?**

1. Check to see if there is a lead line coming into your water meter. You can do this by using a coin to scratch the incoming line. If it is shiny and hard, it is copper. If it is gray/silver and soft, it may be lead. The following link provides more information: <https://apps.npr.org/find-lead-pipes-in-your-home/en/#intro>
2. Get your water tested for lead. Kits are available at local hardware and home improvement stores.
3. Obtain an NSF-approved water filter that removes lead.
4. Run water for 2-3 minutes if you haven't used the water for a few hours.
5. Only use cold water directly out of the faucet for consumption. There is no issue with bathing, dish washing or showering.
6. Use bottled water for infant formula and for pregnant women.
7. Replace your lead service lines with non-lead pipes.

### **My child is less than six years old and may have been exposed to lead in our water. What should I do?**

1. Contact your healthcare provider immediately to have him or her tested for lead exposure.
2. Follow the solutions above to minimize risk from lead in home drinking water quality.

### **When should children be tested for lead exposure?**

As of January 1, 2018, Allegheny County requires that all children be tested for lead exposure at approximately 9-12 months old and again at approximately 24 months. Children who have missed being tested at these ages will need to be tested prior to entering kindergarten.

ACHD offers free blood lead level testing for uninsured and underinsured children in Allegheny County at two of its locations. No advance appointment is necessary. For more information, visit: <http://bit.ly/2vbvnNM>.

### **If I boil the water, will that remove lead content?**

No, boiling water will not remove lead content. In fact, boiling water can increase lead in water, so only boil water that has been filtered with an NSF approved water filter if you are concerned about lead in your water supply.

### **What department oversees the federal lead and copper rule?**

The Pennsylvania DEP is the regulatory authority for the federal lead and copper rule (LCR), and only DEP has the authority to require action or issues penalties due to exceedance or violations of the rule.

### **How often are water systems tested?**

The federal LCR rule requires the public water system itself to test water for lead every three years by requesting that homeowners and tenants voluntarily obtain samples in their homes. If more than 10% of results exceed the federally established action level, which is at 15 parts per billion, the system must then implement measures to decrease those levels.

### **Visit these online resources for additional info:**

#### **Allegheny County Health Department's Lead Exposure Prevention:**

<https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Health-Department/Programs/Special-Initiatives/Lead/Lead-Exposure-Prevention.aspx>

#### **CDC – Lead in Water Guidelines:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm>

#### **EPA – Home Water Testing:**

[http://www.achd.net/pdw/pubs/pdf/2005\\_epa\\_faq\\_homewatertesting.pdf](http://www.achd.net/pdw/pubs/pdf/2005_epa_faq_homewatertesting.pdf)

#### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website (Federal Lead and Copper Rule):**

<https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/lead-and-copper-rule>