LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

National events about lead exposure have generated new concerns for Pennsylvanians related to the safety of their homes and water. WTMA wants to provide helpful information to its customers. Federal and state regulations require that public drinking water suppliers regularly test for contaminants such as lead. DEP monitors water suppliers to ensure that they comply with testing requirements to safeguard our public drinking water supplies. DEP also provides information to private well water users on how to properly maintain their systems to reduce their exposure to lead.

Pennsylvania's Lead and Copper Rule

The purpose of the Lead and Copper Rule is to protect public health by minimizing lead and copper levels in drinking water, primarily by making water less corrosive. When water is corrosive, the lead and copper found in plumbing materials can leach into your drinking water. Pennsylvania's Lead and Copper Rule establishes an action level of 0.015 mg/L for lead and 1.3 mg/L for copper. An action level exceedance is not a violation but can trigger other requirements that include water quality parameter monitoring, corrosion control treatment, source water monitoring/treatment, public education and lead service line replacement. All community water systems (defined as those serving year-round residents) are subject to the Lead and Copper Rule requirements.

What are the sources of lead?

Although most lead exposure occurs when people eat paint chips and inhale lead-contaminated dust, or ingest lead-contaminated residential soil, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 10 to 20 percent of human exposure to lead may come from drinking water. Lead us rarely found in the source of a public water supply such as a river or creek. Rather, it enters tap water through the corrosion of a home's plumbing materials. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures and solder. However, newer homes may also be at risk. Even legally "lead-free" plumbing may contain a trace of lead. The most common problem is with brass or chrome-plated brass faucets and fixtures that can leach amounts of lead into the water, especially hot water.

What can I do to reduce my exposure to lead in drinking water?

Since lead exposure in drinking water typically comes from your plumbing fixtures and not the source of your water supply, it's important for both public drinking water customers as well as private well water users to follow these tips to reduce your exposure to lead:

- **Run your water to flush out lead.** If water hasn't been used for several hours, run water for 15-30 seconds or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature before using it for drinking or cooking. This flushes out any stagnant water in your home plumbing and replaces it with fresh water from the water main in your street.
- **Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula.** Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water tap; lead dissolves more easily into hot water. Do not use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula.
- **Do not boil water to remove lead.** Boiling water will not reduce lead. In fact, lead concentrations will be higher in water that is boiled since some of the water is removed as steam.

- **Test your water for lead.** Contact our office for more information about getting your water tested. Your water system can also provide information about local laboratories that conduct lead testing. If you're a private well water user, you should contact a DEP-accredited lab for information about water testing.
- **Identify if your plumbing fixtures contain lead.** There are lead check swabs that can detect lead on plumbing surfaces such as solder and pipes. These swabs can be purchased at plumbing and home improvement stores.

Where can I get more information about lead and copper levels in my water system?
Community water systems are required to deliver an annual water quality report - also called a Consumer Confidence Report - to all customers. The report contains test results for samples collected during the year.

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