

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER



IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER.

The Green Bay Water Utility found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes and buildings. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Please read this information closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEAD

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources.

- It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body.
- The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children.
- Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected, more than healthy adults at lower levels of lead.
- Lead is stored in the bones, and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones while in utero, which may affect the child's brain development.

SOURCES OF LEAD

Lead is a common metal found in the environment. Drinking water is one possible source of lead exposure. The main sources of lead exposure are:

- Lead-based paint.
- Lead-contaminated dust or soil.
- Some plumbing materials including brass faucets, fittings and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free." Until 2011, "lead-free"

materials could contain up to 8 percent lead. Currently, "lead-free" refers to end-use brass fixtures such as faucets with no more than 0.25 percent lead.

- In the workplace, especially the automotive, foundry, painting and remodeling industries.
- From certain hobbies (lead can be carried on clothing or shoes).
- Certain types of pottery especially pottery made in Mexico, pewter, food and cosmetics.
- Some toys, some playground equipment and some children's metal jewelry.

LEAD AND DRINKING WATER

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 10 to 20 percent of a person's potential exposure to lead may come from drinking water. Infants who consume mostly formula mixed with lead-containing water can receive 40 to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water.

The Green Bay Water Utility's source water and finished drinking water do not contain lead.

When water is in contact with pipes (or service lines) and plumbing containing lead for several hours, the lead may enter drinking water. Homes built before 1988 are more likely to have lead pipes or lead solder. Lead water lines were last installed in Green Bay in 1944, and lead solder was banned in Wisconsin in 1984. Homes built after these dates are less likely to have issues with lead.

Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of the corrosion – or wearing away – of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and household plumbing. These materials include:

- Lead-based solder used to join copper pipes.
- Brass and chrome-plated faucets.
- In few cases, pipes made of lead connecting your house to the water main.

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STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

If you have lead plumbing material or if a water test shows the drinking water in your home contains high lead levels, take the following precautions:



1. Run your water before using it.

Run the water for 1-2 minutes or until it becomes cold before using it for drinking or cooking if it hasn't been used for several hours. This ensures you're using water obtained from the water main in the street versus water that's been sitting and stagnating in your home's water pipes, possibly in contact with sources of lead in the service line, plumbing or fixtures.



2. Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula.

Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water tap as lead dissolves more easily into hot water. Do not use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula.



3. Do not boil water in an effort to remove lead.

Boiling water will NOT reduce lead.



4. Identify and replace plumbing fixtures containing lead.

Newer brass faucets, fittings and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. Until 2014, the law allowed end-use brass fixtures, such as faucets, with up to 8 percent lead to be labeled as "lead-free."



5. Regularly remove loose lead solder and debris trapped behind faucet aerators.

Construction, repairs and nearby vibrations may loosen debris from pipe walls and cause this material to accumulate in the fixtures. Do this by removing the faucet aerators from all taps and running the water for 3-5 minutes.



6. Test your water for lead.

If you have lead pipes in your home, you will know because we have communicated extensively with you regarding removing the lead services. However, since there are other sources of lead that affect drinking water, you can test your water for lead for peace of mind. See our website at www.gbwater.org/testingforlead.



7. Have your child's blood tested.

If you are concerned about lead exposure, contact the Brown County Health Department at (920) 437-9773 or your healthcare provider to find out how you can have your child's blood level tested for lead.



8. Look for alternate sources or treatment of water.

You may want to consider purchasing bottled water or a water filter if your home is served by a utility lead service line (which you can determine by visiting www.gbwater.org/whoisaffectedbyleadinthestreet) or if you have elevated lead levels from other sources in your household plumbing. If you purchase a water filter, select one that is approved to reduce lead or contact NSF International at (800) NSF-8010 or nsf.org for information on performance standards for water filters. Be sure to maintain and replace a filter device in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions to protect water quality.

WHAT ARE WE DOING IN RESPONSE TO THESE LEAD LEVELS?

- **We're Getting the Lead Out of the Utility's water system.** The Green Bay Water Utility is working diligently to "Get the Lead Out" of the system by removing utility-owned lead services and assisting private property owners in removing their private-side lead services (pipes) by Dec. 31, 2020.
 - o **Utility-owned lead services.** On the Utility side, we are actively replacing lead service lines on streets that are being resurfaced and reconstructed each year. As of January 2018, less than 3 percent of the Green Bay Water Utility's water distribution system is made of lead services (about 959 lead service lines).

If you are served by a lead service in the street, owned by the Utility, your address is listed here: www.gbwater.org/whoisaffectedbyleadinthestreet.

- o **Privately owned lead services.** In addition, there are fewer than 70 known private-side lead services (lead pipes on the homeowner side) left to replace in the City. We secured grant funding from the Department of Natural Resources to help property owners with lead pipes for pay for lead service replacement. Homeowners with privately owned lead water service lines are required to replace them under Green Bay Ordinance 21.11. If you have received communication from the Utility regarding having a private-side lead service, please complete your paperwork as grant funding is available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

- **We're unidirectional flushing.** The Utility is also reducing lead levels by performing its second round of its unidirectional flushing program on all 440 miles of distribution water mains. It performed the first round in 2014 and 2015, and did half the City's water mains by flushing water mains via hydrants this past year. We will conduct unidirectional flushing on the other half of the city's water mains this summer and fall. Unidirectional flushing scours the water mains, removing minerals from the walls of water mains known to contribute to the lead levels in our homes.
- **We're conducting public education about lead** including presentations to community groups and mailing educational information about lead created by the Brown County Lead Coalition to targeted audiences.



For more information, call us at (920) 448-3480 or visit our website at www.gbwater.org.



For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home or building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/lead> or contact your healthcare provider.

