

Lead in Drinking Water

Get the facts about lead in drinking water and learn what you can do to protect your family from lead!



Q. What health effects can lead cause?

A. Exposure to lead in drinking water can cause serious health effects in all age groups. Infants and children can have decreases in IQ and attention span. Lead exposure can lead to new learning and behavior problems or exacerbate existing learning and behavior problems. The children of women who are exposed to lead before or during pregnancy can have increased risk of these adverse health effects. Adults can have increased risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, kidney or nervous system problems.

Q. What are sources of Lead?

A. The primary sources of lead exposure for most children are deteriorating lead-based paint, lead-contaminated dust, and lead-contaminated residential soil. Lead is rarely found in source water but enters tap water through corrosion of plumbing materials, such as service lines, lead or brass faucets, fittings, and valves that contain lead. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures, and solder.

Q. Are there other sources of lead? How can children be exposed?

A. Lead is a common metal found in the environment. Drinking water is only one possible source of lead exposure. In our area, the most common way children are exposed to lead is from lead-based paint. Chipping or peeling lead-based paint creates lead dust. Children can pick up lead dust when they crawl on the floor or put their hands and toys in their mouth. It's important to wash your child's toys and hands often, to remove lead dust. Children can also be exposed to lead through contaminated soil or from consumer products such as imported toys, pottery/ceramics, pewter, food, spices, or cosmetics. Adults with certain jobs (construction, house painting, plumbing, auto repair, or jewelry repair) or hobbies (fishing, making or shooting firearms, or making stained glass or pottery) can bring lead into the home on work clothing and shoes.

Q. How can I get my child tested for lead?

A. Your child's family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide information about the health effects of lead. The Onondaga County Health Department can also provide information about how you can have your child's blood tested for lead. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) agree there is no safe level of lead. Public health action may be needed when the level of lead in a child's blood is considered elevated. If an elevated result is reported, the Onondaga County Health Department will contact the parent/guardian directly. For more information, call 315-435-3271, email LeadFreeKids@ongov.net, visit onondaga.gov/health-env/lead, or use this link to find out if your child needs a lead test: redcap.link/r8076nak.

Q. How can I find out if my service line is made of lead?

A. Contact the City of Syracuse Water Department for information on your home's lead service line. You can visit syr.gov/Lead-Free-Syracuse to search the service line inventory map. Residents can also hire a certified plumber to inspect both the service line and other plumbing materials in your home.

Q. What is the City of Syracuse doing?

A. The City of Syracuse Water Department treats drinking water with orthophosphate, a food-grade additive approved by the FDA and recognized by the EPA for reducing lead levels by coating lead service lines. The City continues to monitor water quality, actively replaces lead lines during projects, and is developing a plan to replace all 17,000+ lead service lines ahead of the EPA's deadline.



Q. Is my water safe to drink? What can I do to reduce lead in my drinking water?

A. If you are concerned about the lead levels at your location, there are several things you can do separately or in combination:

- **Run your water to flush out lead.** Before drinking, flush your home's pipes for several minutes by running the tap, taking a shower, doing laundry, or doing a load of dishes. The amount of time to run the water will depend on whether your home has a lead service line or not, and the length of the lead service line. Please contact the utility for further recommendations on flushing times.
- **Use cold water.** Do not use hot water from the tap for cooking, drinking or making baby formula. Lead dissolves more easily into hot water.
- **Do not boil water to remove lead.** Boiling water does not reduce lead.
- **Use a water filter properly.** Using a filter can reduce lead in drinking water. If you use a filter, it should be certified to remove lead. For information about identifying filters certified to reduce lead, visit the EPA's website at: epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-06/how-to-id-filters-certified-to-reduce-lead-in-drinking-water-epa_june-2024.pdf
- **Follow the manufacturer's instructions provided with the filter to learn how to properly install, maintain, and use your cartridge and when to replace it.** For more information on facts and advice on home water filtration systems, visit EPA's website at epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-06/how-to-id-filters-certified-to-reduce-lead-in-drinking-water-epa_june-2024.pdf
- **Clean your aerator.** Regularly remove and clean your faucet's screen (also known as an aerator) if it is equipped with an aerator. Sediment, debris, and lead particles can collect in your aerator. If lead particles are caught in the aerator, lead can get into your water.
- **Learn what your service line material is.** A service line is the pipe that connects your home to the water main. Visit syr.gov/Lead-Free-Syracuse and use the map to learn what your service line is made of. If you don't find information about your service line material online or it is shown as unknown, contact us at 315-448-8354 or a licensed plumber to identify your service line material. For a video showing how to self-identify your service line material, visit: health.ny.gov/environmental/water/drinking/lead/.
- **Replace your plumbing fixtures if they are found to contain lead.** Visit the NSF website at nsf.org/newsroom_pdf/Lead_free_certification_marks.pdf to learn more about lead-containing plumbing fixtures and how to identify lead-free certification marks on new fixtures.
- **Learn about construction in your neighborhood.** Contact us at 314-448-8354 to find out about any construction or maintenance work that could disturb your service line. Construction may cause more lead to be released from a lead service line if present.

Q. How can I get my water tested?

A. The City of Syracuse Water Department conducts water sampling at residential properties every six months. If you are interested in volunteering for this testing, please call the Department of Water at 315-448-8354. Alternatively, customers may arrange for their water to be tested by calling Life Science Laboratories, Inc. at 315-445-1105.

Q. Where can I learn more information?

A. For information about what your service line material is, lead service line replacement, or to have your water tested, contact the City of Syracuse Water Department at 315-448-8354 or email WaterLead@syr.gov. To obtain a copy of the City of Syracuse or other municipal water quality report, contact the Onondaga County Department of Health Water Supply Division at 315-435-6600, email PHEng@ongov.net, or visit: onondaga.gov/health-env/lead/. For information on the health impact of lead in water, contact the Onondaga County Health Department at 315-435-3271 or email LeadFreeKids@ongov.net.

Helpful Links & Resources:

Onondaga County Health Department's Lead Poisoning Prevention Website:
onondaga.gov/health/lead/

City of Syracuse Water Department:
syr.gov/Lead-Free-Syracuse

Environmental Protection Agency Website:

epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water

New York State Department of Health:
health.ny.gov/environmental/water/drinking/lead/



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City of Syracuse Water Department: 315-448-8354
Health Department Water Supply Division: 315-435-6600
Health Department Lead Poisoning Prevention Program: 315-435-3271