



Private Drinking Water

Lead in Drinking Water from Private Water Systems

Lead is a metal found in natural deposits and has been commonly used in household plumbing materials and water service lines.

While Lead is relatively uncommon in the ground water supplying private water system wells in Ohio, it can occur. In areas where lead is found in the ground water it is due to the localized geologic occurrence of lead bearing minerals in the aquifer.

In these areas, the construction and depth of the well completion may contribute to the levels of lead found in the groundwater supplying the well.

The more common source of lead in drinking water primarily occurs when water makes contact with plumbing materials and water service lines. Prior to the current knowledge of the health hazards of lead, it was widely used in products such as gasoline, paints, batteries, metal products and ammunition -- just to name a few.

What are the Drinking Water Standards?

The US EPA has no established maximum contaminant level (MCL) for lead in drinking water from public water systems but has instead established a lead action level of 0.015 mg/L or 15 parts per billion (ppb) for public water systems.

For source water supplied by private water systems, the Ohio Department of Health's Residential Water and Sewage Program recommends that owners of private water systems take action to remove the lead or reduce the levels of lead when levels are detected above 15 ppb. If the cause of the lead problem is not from the source water aquifer, contact the Ohio Department of Health Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (877) 668-5323 or (614) 466-1450 or lead@odh.ohio.gov.



What are the Health Effects?

For information about the health effects of lead visit the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program Web pages for:

Lead Poisoning – Children:

http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/cfhs/lead_ch/leadch1.aspx

Lead Poisoning Surveillance – Adults:

http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/hpr/l_adult/leadadults.aspx

How can the plumbing put lead into the drinking water from my private water system?

There are several **potential risk factors** that affect how much lead can get into your drinking water:

- 1) The type of plumbing materials, fixtures, and water lines used.*
 - Because lead is toxic, its use in the U.S. has been dramatically reduced since the 1980s. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures and solder. However, new homes are also at risk: even legally “lead-free” plumbing may contain up to 8 percent lead. The most common problem is with brass or chrome-plated brass faucets and fixtures which can leach significant amounts of lead into the water, especially hot water.
- 2) The amount of time the water stays in the pipes.*
 - The longer the water sits in the pipes without being used, the more likely lead can be leached into the water.
- 3) The pH (acidity or alkalinity) of the water.*
 - Corrosive water (which has a very high or very low pH) can dissolve lead from the supply pipes, faucets, or solder and flux used to connect copper pipes. See the Private Water Systems Program Web page on pH for more information (http://www.odh.ohio.gov/en/odhprograms/eh/water/quality_treatment/pH.aspx).

4) *The mineral content of the water.*

- Soft (water with a low mineral content), acidic water can dissolve lead from the pipes or solder of household water systems.

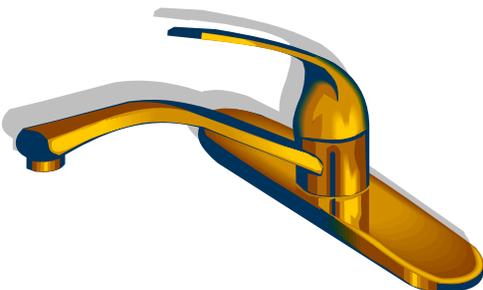
What are the Treatment Options for Lead in my Water?

First, identify if the source of the lead is the groundwater itself, part of the well or part of the household plumbing system. Ideally, you will be able to find and remove the lead source. If you have a private well, check both the well and the pump for potential lead sources. These may include brass fittings, lead in pump materials, and lead packers that were historically used in wells. A registered private water systems contractor can help you determine if any of the well components are a source of lead.

Heating or boiling your water will not remove lead. As some of the water evaporates during the boiling process, the lead concentration of the water can actually increase slightly as the water is boiled.

If the source is not the groundwater and it is not possible or cost-effective to remove the lead source of the water system or install treatment, flushing the water system before using the water for drinking or cooking may be an option. Any time a particular faucet has not been used for several hours (approximately six or more), you can flush the system by running the water for about one to two minutes or until the water becomes as cold as it will get. Flush each faucet individually before using the water for drinking or cooking. You can use the water flushed from the tap to wash dishes or clothing, or clean. Avoid cooking with or drinking hot tap water because hot water dissolves lead more readily than cold water does. Do not use hot tap water to make cereals, drinks or mix baby formula. You may draw cold water after flushing the tap and then heat it if needed.

You may also wish to consider water treatment methods such as reverse osmosis, distillation, and carbon filters specially designed to remove lead. Typically these methods are installed at the point of use and treat water at only one faucet.



Links to treatment information for lead in drinking water:

National Sanitation Foundation http://www.nsf.org/newsroom/pdf/DW_2014_Lead_fact_sheet.pdf

Water Systems Council wellcare® information about Well Water Treatment Options and Costs <http://www.watersystemscouncil.org/documents/DrinkingWaterTreatmentsandCostsFINAL.pdf>

For more information, contact the Ohio Department of Health Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at: (877) 668-5323 or (614) 466-1450 or lead@odh.ohio.gov or http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/dspc/lp_prev/lp_prev1.aspx.

References and Additional Resources

Ohio Department of Health's Health Assessment fact sheet –Lead (<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/~media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/eh/HAS/lead.ashx>)

US EPA – Lead in Drinking Water (<http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/lead/index.cfm>)

US EPA – Is There Lead in my Drinking Water? (<http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/lead/leadfactsheet.cfm>)

CDC – Lead - Water (<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm>)

ATSDR Toxic Substances Portal: Lead (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/substances/toxsubstance.asp?toxid=22>)

Water Systems Council wellcare® information about lead (<http://www.watersystemscouncil.org/VAiWebDocs/WSCDocs/1271226LEAD.PDF>)

Where can I get more information about my private drinking water?

Ohio Department of Health
Residential Water and Sewage Program
35 E. Chestnut Street, 7th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone: (614) 644-7558
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