

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Answers to most questions can also be found at www.pgh2o.com/lead-facts.

Does Pittsburgh have lead in its drinking water?

Lead enters drinking water through lead service lines and household plumbing. There is no detectable lead in PWSA's drinking water when it leaves the treatment plant and travels through water mains. Recent regulatory compliance testing in PWSA's service area detected high levels of lead in some homes. Samples for these tests were taken from homes that have, or are expected to have, lead service lines or plumbing. PWSA treats drinking water to reduce lead corrosion, but is actively working to see if other treatment methods may be more effective. Because PWSA cannot completely eliminate the corrosion of lead from old service lines or lead plumbing into water, it is important for customers to learn how to reduce the risk of exposure.

Where does the lead found in tap water come from?

Lead enters drinking water through corrosion in lead pipes or plumbing materials. The primary source of lead in water is old service lines that connect homes to the water main in the street. These service lines are a joint responsibility. PWSA owns the portion of the line from the water main to the curb, and homeowners are responsible for the portion from the curb to their home. PWSA estimates that 25% of homes in Pittsburgh still have lead service lines.

Additional sources of lead in water include:

- interior lead pipe
- interior galvanized pipe (especially if there was, or is, a full or partial lead service line)
- interior copper pipe with lead soldered joints
- interior plumbing fixtures (purchased or installed prior to January 2014 before the effective date of new definition of "lead-free")

What can I do to reduce risk of exposure to lead?

If you know or suspect that you have lead service lines or plumbing, there are ways to reduce your exposure to lead in your drinking water:

- **Run your water to flush out lead.** If you haven't used your water for several hours, run your cold tap for one minute before using for cooking or drinking. Homes with longer lead water service lines may require flushing for a longer period. Using toilets, washing clothes, showering, or doing dishes before you drink from your tap are all ways that you can flush your service line without wasting water.
- **Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula.** Lead dissolves more easily in hot water. Do not drink, cook with, or make baby formula using hot water.
- **Do not boil water to remove lead.** Boiling water will not reduce lead.
- **Look for alternative sources or treatment of water.** Purchase an [NSF water filter](#) that is certified to [remove lead](#). Customers can also choose to drink bottled water.
- **Identify if your plumbing fixtures contain lead.** There are commercially-available lead check swabs that can detect lead on plumbing surfaces such as solder and pipes. You can also go to www.pgh2o.com/lead-facts to see our infographic on identifying lead pipe materials in your home. Consider having lead-containing pipes and fixtures replaced.

- **Contact PWSA if you decide to replace your lead service line.** Depending on your income, you may be eligible to have your lead service line replaced at no cost. Low-interest loans are also available to some homeowners for replacing lead service lines on private property through the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) ROLL program at ura.org.
- **Test your water for lead.** Call us at 412.255.2423, or go to www.pgh2o.com/leadform to request a free lead test kit. This service is available for all homes in the City of Pittsburgh and Millvale.
- **Get your child's blood tested.** If you think your child may have been exposed to lead, talk to you doctor about testing your child. Allegheny County requires all children to be tested for lead exposure at approximately 9-12 months, and again at 24 months.

What is PWSA doing to reduce lead in water?

PWSA is identifying and removing lead service lines in public space. As the Authority identifies the location of lead service lines, it will make the information [available to the public](#). **If customers decide to replace lead service lines, they should contact PWSA's Lead Help Desk at 412.255.8987 or email LeadHelp@pgh2o.com for information about coordinating efforts.**

In addition, PWSA is conducting studies to help determine why lead levels have risen and identify water treatment chemicals, or modifications to the treatment plant that may reduce corrosion from lead pipes. This testing will inform PWSA's future corrosion control methods. The studies may also help determine if past changes to the water treatment process have impacted the levels of lead found in tap water.

PWSA is offering free lead test kits for all residents of the City of Pittsburgh and Millvale. To request a kit, go to www.pgh2o.com/leadform or call 412.255.2423. After the request is placed, kits are mailed to customers in approximately 14 days. Samples are then sent to an independent laboratory, and the results are provided to the customer via letter.

PWSA is educating customers about lead through distribution of public education brochures and posters through the City of Pittsburgh and Millvale, regularly updating the website at www.pgh2o.com/lead-facts, attending local community meetings, and social media outreach.

Where can I get more information on lead in water?

- Additional information can be found at www.pgh2o.com/lead-facts.
- Allegheny County Health Department's website: www.achd.net/lead
- EPA: www.epa.gov/lead or by calling 800.424.LEAD
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP): www.dep.pa.gov/Citizens/My-Water/PublicDrinkingWater/Pages/Lead-in-Drinking-Water.aspx
- Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm
- NSF: <http://bit.ly/1M4Aoa7>



Why do some homes have high levels of detected lead?



There are multiple factors that may impact lead levels in drinking water. One possible explanation for the increase seen in recent EPA-mandated lead and copper testing is that the protocols for testing have become more rigorous. PWSA must now sample taps from homes more likely to have the presence of lead service lines, plumbing, and fixtures. EPA has acknowledged that these more stringent guidelines increase the likelihood of finding the lead during testing.

How does PWSA test homes for lead?

Every six months, PWSA requests water samples from approximately 200 homes that were determined to have, or are expected to have, lead service lines or plumbing. Results from lead testing taken from July 1 to December 30, 2018 were evaluated and the 90th percentile value was calculated at **21 parts per billion (ppb)**. The “90th percentile” is a calculation to determine whether 10 percent of sites exceeded the action level of 15 ppb. Previous compliance testing results were 15 ppb in June of 2017, 18 ppb in December 2016, and 22 ppb in June 2016. Results from the next round of testing will be available in June 2018.

What's next?

PWSA is seeking Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) approval to modify water treatment improvements to reduce corrosion in lead pipes throughout the entire water system. These upgrades are estimated to be in place in the next three to six months.

When elevated levels of lead are found in tap water in some homes, PWSA must comply with federal law to replace a portion of the lead service lines in its water system. The 2018 lead service line replacement program includes replacement of the PWSA-owned service lines, and provides limited funding to replace lead lines identified on private property. Recent changes to state law now allow PWSA to perform lead service line replacements on private property as part of the replacement program, preventing potentially harmful partial lead service line replacements.

Resources

- 1) To request a free customer lead test kit: Call PWSA Customer Service or go to www.pgh2o.com/leadform
- 2) For any other questions regarding the lead program, please call the PWSA Lead Help Desk at 412.255.8987 or email at LeadHelp@pgh2o.com.
- 3) To receive a discount coupon for a water pitcher certified for lead removal, visit http://pittsburghpa.gov/safepgh2o/ZeroWater_Coupons.pdf
- 4) Women for a Healthy Environment (WHE) is distributing water pitchers and filters that are certified to remove lead from tap water, and hosting community workshops to discuss lead exposure. Priority for filters is given to pregnant women and households with young children. WomenForAHealthyEnvironment.org
- 5) For more information on lead service line replacement, contact the PWSA Help Desk at 412-255-8987 or via email at LeadHelp@pgh2o.com
- 6) For information on low-interest loans for lead service line replacements, visit the Urban Redevelopment Authority's website at: http://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/ura-files/ROLL_4-27-2017Final_jk.pdf