

STERLING WATER DEPARTMENT

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

Why am I receiving this brochure? STERLING WATER DEPARTMENT found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings during the MONITORING PERIOD 6/1/2019 to 9/30/2019 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.

US EPA and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) require public water systems that exceed the lead action level to provide this notification to consumers. Lead is a health concern and is commonly found in the environment; most commonly in lead based paint. Lead can also be found in water, though at much lower levels

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 by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. 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, which may affect brain development.

Sources of Lead

Lead is a common metal found in the environment. Common sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint, household dust, soil, and some plumbing materials and fixtures. Lead can also be found in other household items such as pottery, makeup, toys, and even food. Lead paint was outlawed in 1978, but dust from homes that still have lead paint is the most common source of exposure to lead. Therefore, make sure to wash your children's hands and toys often as they can come into contact with dirt and dust containing lead.

The water provided by STERLING WATER DEPT. is lead-free when it leaves the well . Local distribution pipes that carry the water to your community are made mostly of iron

and steel, plastic and transite and therefore do not add lead to water. However, lead can get into tap water through lead piping, lead solder used in plumbing, and some brass faucets and fixtures. You cannot see, taste, or smell lead in the water. Even though the use of lead solder was banned in the U.S. in 1986, it still might be present in older homes.

The corrosion or wearing away of these lead-based materials can add lead to tap water, particularly if water sits for a long time in the pipes before use. Therefore, water that has been sitting in household pipes for several hours, such as in the morning, or after returning from work or school, is more likely to contain lead. If high levels of lead are found in drinking water, water may typically contribute up to 20 percent of a person's exposure to lead. However, infants who consume mostly formula, mixed with lead-containing water, can receive up to 60 percent of their exposure from water.

Steps You Can Take to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water

Listed below are steps that you can take to reduce your exposure to lead and copper in drinking water:

- **Run your water to flush out lead- Fresh water is better than stale:** If your water has been sitting for several hours, run the water until it is consistently cold- this usually takes about 15-30 seconds-before drinking or cooking with it. This flushes water which may contain lead from pipes. Run water for 5 minutes if you have a lead service line or any lead pipes in your home plumbing.
- **Use cold, fresh 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 your water to remove lead or copper. Boiling water will not reduce lead.** Excessive boiling of water makes the lead and copper more concentrated - the lead and copper remains when the water evaporates
- **Identify and replace plumbing fixtures containing lead or lead solder.** Brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. The law previously allowed end-use brass fixtures, such as faucets, with up to 8 percent lead to be labeled as "lead free." As of January 4, 2014, end-use brass fixtures, such as faucets, fittings and valves, must meet the new "lead-free" definition of having no more than 0.25 percent lead on a weighted average. If you are concerned about lead in tap water, you should consider buying a low-lead or no-lead fixture. Contact [NSF](#) to learn more about lead-containing plumbing fixtures and how to identify lead-free certification marks on new fixtures.
- **Find out if your home/building has a lead service line and make arrangements to remove it.**
- **Test your home for lead:** The only way to determine the level of lead in drinking water at your home is to have the water tested by a state certified laboratory. The

cost to test is usually between \$10 and \$50. Consider having your paint tested also. A list of labs is available online at <http://eeaonline.eea.state.ma.us/DEP/Labcert/Labcert.aspx> or you can call MassDEP at 978-682-5237 or e-mail Labcert@state.ma.us. You may also contact us at 978-422-6767 to find out how to get your water tested for lead and copper.

- **Consider alternative sources or treatment of water.** If your water contains lead you may want to consider purchasing bottled water or a water filter. If considering a filter read the package to be sure the filter is approved to reduce lead or contact NSF International at 800- NSF-8010 or www.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. Also, if you are considering using bottled water, note that it may cost up to 1,000 times more than tap water. Simply flushing your tap, as described above, is usually a cheaper and equally effective alternative.
- **Contact your health care provider or your local health department to find out if your child needs to be tested for lead.** A blood lead level test is the only way to know if your child is being exposed to lead. For more information on Massachusetts' childhood lead testing program, contact the Department of Public Health (DPH) at <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/childhood-lead-poisoning-prevention-program> or at 1-800-532-9571.
- **If you have health concerns,** please contact your health care provider with any questions.

Additional Information on Lead content in plumbing materials— Prior to 2014, plumbing materials like faucets that contained up to 8% of lead were deemed "lead free". In 2011, Congress has enacted a legislation prohibiting the use and introduction into commerce, among other plumbing materials, of any faucets that contain more than a weighted average of 0.25% lead based on wetted surfaces of pipes, fittings and fixtures, like faucets. The link below will help you identify the marks on products that are certified as "lead free" by a third-party certification body:

[Brochure: How to Identify Lead Free Certification Marks for Drinking Water System & Plumbing Products](#)

Why are there elevated levels of lead in the drinking water and what is being done to reduce the levels?

The water provided by The sterling water dept. is lead-free when it leaves the well. However, lead can get into tap water through lead service lines, lead solder used in plumbing, and some brass fixtures.

- ✓ Sterling water dept. is concerned about lead in your drinking water. We have both an extensive testing program and have treated the water to make it less corrosive. Although most homes have very low levels of lead in their drinking water, some homes may still have lead levels above the EPA and State Action Level of 15 parts per billion (ppb).
- ✓ To monitor lead levels, sterling water tests tap water in homes that are most likely to have lead. These homes are usually older homes that may have lead service lines or lead solder, and they must be tested after water has been sitting overnight. The EPA rule requires that 90% of these worst case samples must have lead levels below the Action Level of 15 ppb.
- ✓ Sterling water treats your water to make it less corrosive, thereby reducing the leaching of lead into drinking water. Starting in the 1980's, sterling water dept. has added potassium hydroxide to increase the pH and buffering capacity of the water, and has steadily fine-tuned these levels since corrosion control treatment began.

Due to this treatment change, lead levels found in sample tests of tap water have dropped over the last 10 years. The sterling water dept. service area has been below the Lead Action Level since 2014. Because lead levels in home plumbing can vary, individual communities may occasionally have higher test results.

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Please share this information on LEAD with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call us at 978-422-6767

For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit:

- EPA's website at <http://www2.epa.gov/lead>, or call the EPA lead hotline at 1-800-424- 5323
- MassDEP's website at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/is-there-lead-in-my-tap-water>
- Department of Public Health's website at <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/childhood-lead-poisoning-prevention-program>

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