

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and **City of Cudahy Water Utility** are concerned about lead in your drinking water. Although most homes have very low levels of lead in their drinking water, some homes in the community have lead levels above the EPA action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb), or 0.015 milligrams of lead per liter of water (mg/L).

Lead in drinking water, although rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning, can significantly increase a person's total lead exposure, particularly the exposure of infants who drink baby formulas and concentrated juices that are mixed with water. EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20% or more of a person's total exposure to lead.

HOW LEAD ENTERS OUR WATER

Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminants in that it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like rivers and lakes. 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 pipe, brass and chrome-plated brass faucets, and in some cases, pipes made of lead that connect your house to the water main (service lines). In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing greater than 0.2% lead, and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes and other plumbing materials to 8.0%.

When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems containing lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon after returning from work or school, can contain fairly high levels of lead.

STEPS TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

Despite our best efforts to control water corrosivity and remove lead from the water supply, lead levels in some homes or buildings can be high. To find out whether you need to take action in your own home, have your drinking water tested to determine if it contains excessive concentrations of lead. Testing the water is essential because you cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. Some local laboratories that can provide this service are listed at the bottom of this brochure. For more information on having your water tested, please call **(414) 769-2234**.

If a water test indicates that the drinking water drawn from a tap in your home contains lead above 15 ppb, then you should take the following precautions:

1. FLUSH YOUR SYSTEM.

Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your family's health. Flushing usually uses less than one or two gallons of water and costs less than **\$0.34** per month.

To flush, let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. The longer water resides in your home's plumbing, the more lead it may contain. Flushing the tap means running the cold water faucet until the water gets noticeably colder, usually about 15 - 30 seconds. If your house has a lead service line to the water main, you may have to flush the water for a longer time, perhaps one minute, before drinking. Although toilet flushing or showering flushes water through a portion of your home's

plumbing system, you still need to flush the water in each faucet before using it for drinking or cooking.

To conserve water, fill a couple of bottles for drinking water after flushing the tap, and whenever possible use the first flush water to wash dishes or water plants.

If you live in a high-rise building, letting the water flow before using it may not lessen your risk from lead. This is because high rise plumbing systems have more, and sometimes larger pipes than smaller buildings. Ask your landlord for help in locating the source of the lead and for advice on reducing the lead level.

2. USE ONLY COLD WATER FOR COOKING AND DRINKING.

Try not to cook with, or drink more lead more quickly than cold tap and heat it on the



water from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the stove.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects of lead.

State and local government agencies that can be contacted include:

City of Cudahy Water Utility at (414) 769-2234 can provide you with information about your community's water supply, and a list of local laboratories that have been certified by EPA for testing water quality.

City of Cudahy Inspection Department at (414) 769-2234 can provide you with information about building permit records that should contain the names of plumbing contractors that plumbed your home; and

City of Cudahy Health Department at (414) 769-2239 can provide you with information about the effects of lead and how you can have your child's blood tested.

