

# 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. How does lead enter drinking water?

**A.** Homes built before 1986 may have lead in plumbing like water service lines, pipes, solder, and plumbing fixtures. Lead may enter the water as it passes through the lead pipes or when it sits overnight in a home's plumbing system. Plumbing materials, including pipes, new brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute to lead in drinking water. The law currently allows pipes, fittings, and fixtures with up to 0.25 percent weighted average of lead to be identified as "lead-free." Skaneateles Lake is the source water for the City of Syracuse and does **not** contain lead. The water mains that deliver water to residents in the City of Syracuse do **not** contain lead.

## 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. What health effects can lead cause?

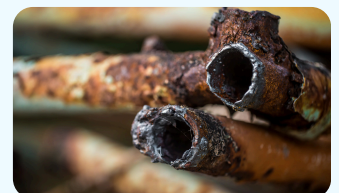
**A.** Exposure to lead from any source can cause serious health effects, especially for young children and pregnant women. Exposure to lead can damage a child's brain and nervous system. This can cause learning problems, delayed growth, and problems with hearing or speech. Adults exposed to lead can have increased risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, kidney or nervous system problems. Pregnant individuals exposed to lead may experience preterm birth or other pregnancy complications. Lead may pass to the fetus during the pregnancy.

## 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](mailto:LeadFreeKids@ongov.net), visit [ongov.net/health/lead](http://ongov.net/health/lead), or use this link to find out if your child needs a lead test: <https://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. Residents can also hire a certified plumber to inspect both the service line and other plumbing materials in your home.



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

A. Preventing lead exposure is important for your family's health! Fortunately, there are things you can do to protect your family from lead. Follow these tips to help keep your family safe:

- Use cold water for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula. Lead dissolves more easily into hot water than in cold water. Boiling water does not reduce the concentration of lead in the water.
- Let your tap run for 30–60 seconds in the morning, before using the water for drinking or cooking. Water that sits overnight in your home's plumbing system may increase the lead in your water. Running the tap flushes the pipes and helps to reduce the concentration of lead in your drinking water. Taking a shower, doing laundry, or doing a load of dishes also help to flush the pipes.
- Regularly clean your faucet's screen or 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.
- Consider purchasing bottled water or a water filter.
- Make sure the water filter you purchase is certified to remove lead. Read the directions provided with your water filter to learn how to properly install and maintain the filter.

## Q. What is the City of Syracuse doing?

A. The City of Syracuse Water Department currently treats the water with orthophosphate, a food-grade additive deemed safe for consumption by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Orthophosphate is also recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as an effective additive in water to reduce lead levels by creating a coating inside of lead service lines, creating a barrier between the lead pipes and the water. The City of Syracuse continues to perform lead and water quality monitoring of our water system supply. We have also been actively removing lead service lines as they are encountered in project areas. The City of Syracuse Water Department is also creating an inventory of all service lines in the water system. A public facing portal will be created in the coming months where residents will be able to search if they have a lead water service line in their home.

## 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 City at (315) 448-8360. 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?

- 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) 448-8340 or email [wateroperations@syr.gov](mailto:wateroperations@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](mailto:PHEng@ongov.net), or visit: [www.ongov.net/health/env/quality.html](http://www.ongov.net/health/env/quality.html).
- 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](mailto:LeadFreeKids@ongov.net).

## Helpful Links & Resources:

- *Onondaga County Health Department's Lead Poisoning Prevention Website:*  
[www.ongov.net/health/lead/](http://www.ongov.net/health/lead/)
- *Onondaga County Health Department's Safe Drinking Water Website:*  
[www.ongov.net/health/env/lead.html](http://www.ongov.net/health/env/lead.html)
- *City of Syracuse Water Department:*  
[www.syr.gov/Departments/Water](http://www.syr.gov/Departments/Water)

