

Important Information About Lead in Your Drinking Water

The City of Syracuse Water Department found elevated levels of lead in drinking water of some homes/buildings. The lead levels were discovered during recent routine lead sampling for the New York State Department of Health, received July 2024. During the sampling, 104 homes throughout the city were sampled. These homes are confirmed to have lead service lines. Of those 104 homes, 27 homes came back with a result above the lead action level of 15 parts per billion. The source of lead in the sampled drinking water is the lead service lines feeding these homes and lead fittings and/or solder in the home's internal plumbing. Homes that tested over the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) action level have been sent notices of their results along with a request to resample.

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.

What is an EPA Action Level?

Public water systems are required to test tap water from homes and buildings likely to have plumbing that contains lead. The EPA lead action level is a measure of the effectiveness of the corrosion control treatment in water systems. If more than 10 percent of tap water tested exceeds the EPA lead action level of 0.015 mg/L (15 ppb), then a public water system is required to provide public education, adjust treatment, and complete lead service line replacement. The action level is not a standard for establishing a safe level of lead in a home.

How Does Lead Enter Drinking Water?

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.

Sources of Lead

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.

Health Effects of Lead

Exposure to lead in drinking water can cause serious health effects in all age groups. Infants and children can have decreases in IQ and attention span. Lead exposure can lead to new learning and behavior problems or exacerbate existing learning and behavior problems. The children of women who are exposed to lead before or during pregnancy can have increased risk of these adverse health effects. Adults can have increased risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, kidney, or nervous system problems.

Blood Lead Testing

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, visit ongov.net/health/lead, or use this link to find out if your child needs a lead test: <https://redcap.link/r8076nak>.

What Can I Do To Reduce Lead In My Drinking Water?

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 a minimum of 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.
- To have your water tested, contact the City of Syracuse Water Department at (315) 448-8340 or email wateroperations@syr.gov.

What is the City of Syracuse Doing?

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. For more information about what your service line material is, contact the City of Syracuse Water Department at (315) 448-8340 or email wateroperations@syr.gov.

Where can I learn more information?

Call us at (315) 448-8340 or visit our website at <http://www.syr.gov/departments/water>. For more information on lead in drinking water, contact the Onondaga County Health Department Water Supply Division at (315) 435-6600 or email PHEng@ongov.net, or the New York State Department of Health directly by calling the toll-free number (within New York State) 1-800-458-1158, extension 27650, or out of state at (518) 402-7650, or by email at bpwsp@health.ny.gov. General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk from lead in drinking water are available from the EPA's website: <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water>.

Please share this information 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.

To obtain a copy of the City of Syracuse or other municipal water quality report, contact the Onondaga County Health Department Water Supply Division at (315) 435-6600, email PHEng@ongov.net, or visit: 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, email LeadFreeKids@ongov.net, or visit: <http://www.ongov.net/health/lead/>.