

LEAD

The most common source of lead in drinking water is the plumbing in your home



ILLINOIS
AMERICAN WATER

The facts about lead and drinking water

Illinois American Water regularly tests for lead in drinking water and has taken steps to minimize levels through improvements in corrosion control. Although these tests indicate that lead is not present in our treated water, lead and/or copper levels in some homes and businesses might be detected due to customer use of lead pipes, lead solder and molded metal faucets in household plumbing.

Health effects associated with high levels of lead

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets standards related to lead in drinking water. Lead levels that exceed these standards could cause serious damage to the brain, kidneys, nervous system and red blood cells. The greatest risk, even with short-term exposure, is to young children and pregnant women.

Lead levels in drinking water are more likely to be higher:

- if your home or water system has lead pipes or has a lead service line
- if your home has copper pipes with lead solder
- if your was built before 1986
AND
- if you have soft or acidic water
- if water sits in the pipes for several hours

Minimizing your exposure to lead

You cannot see, smell or taste lead, and boiling water will not remove lead. Although our water is treated to minimize the risk of lead, you can reduce your family's exposure to lead in drinking water by following these few simple steps:

- **Flush your tap before drinking or cooking with water if the water in the faucet has gone unused for more than six hours.** The longer the water lies dormant in your home's plumbing, the more lead it might contain. Flush your tap with cold water for 30 seconds to two minutes before using. To conserve water, catch the running water and use it to water your plants.
- **Try not to cook with or drink water from the hot water faucet.** Hot water has the potential to contain more lead than cold water. When you need hot water, heat cold water on the stove or in the microwave.
- **Remove loose lead solder and debris from plumbing.** In newly-constructed homes or homes in which the plumbing was recently replaced, remove the strainers from each faucet and run the water from 3 to 5 minutes. When replacing or working on pipes, be sure to use materials that are lead-free.
- See also information in the orange box on the back of this sheet related to home treatment devices.

These steps will reduce your overall exposure to lead in the environment. If you are still concerned about elevated levels and want to find out where you can have your water tested by a certified laboratory, contact the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act Hotline at (800) 426-4791.



For more information

Illinois American Water
Customer Service
Center: (800) 422-2782

Our customer service representatives are available 24/7 to assist you.

EPA Hotline:
(800) 426-4791

Visit us online at
illinoisamwater.com.

WE CARE ABOUT WATER. IT'S WHAT WE DO.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Is there lead in the water that Illinois American Water supplies?

No. Illinois American Water regularly tests for lead at the end of its treatment process. Testing has shown that lead is not present in the water exiting any of our water treatment facilities.

Does that mean I do not have lead in my water?

Not necessarily. You might have lead in your drinking water if your household plumbing system has lead pipes or if lead solder was used in the joints of copper pipes.

Homes built before 1930 are more likely to have lead plumbing systems. Lead pipes are dull grey color and scratch easily, revealing a shiny surface. Lead solder used to join copper pipes is a silver or grey color.

There are lead kits available at some local hardware stores that can be used to test for the presence of lead in solder.

If your house was built before January 1986, you are more likely to have lead-soldered joints. If you do, the chance of the lead leaching into your drinking water is greater when water has been standing in the pipes for many hours, such as overnight.

Is lead in water regulated and does Illinois American Water comply with the standards?

Yes. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's lead standard is an action level that requires treatment modifications if lead test results exceed 15 parts per billion (ppb) in more than 10 percent of first draw samples taken from household taps.

We conduct tests in our distribution system in accordance with the EPA regulatory requirements. For further information, visit our website at www.illinoisamwater.com to view our latest consumer confidence report. Under the Ensuring Water Quality menu, select Water Quality Reports.

Should I flush my water faucets every morning before drinking water or using it for food preparation?

If you know you have lead pipes or lead solder was used on your copper piping, flushing your pipes by running your water before use is a good way to reduce your exposure. Early uses for washing and toilet flushing will quickly move water through your home plumbing system.

How can I tell if my water contains too much lead?

You can have your water tested for lead. Since you cannot see, taste or smell lead dissolved in water, testing is the only sure way of knowing.

Getting your water tested for lead

Illinois American Water does provide testing for lead for individual customers who request it. Alternatively, customers can choose to have their water tested at their cost at an accredited laboratory.

For more information:

- Contact the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act Hotline at (800) 426-4791.

Will electrical grounding increase my lead levels?

Possibly. If grounding wires from electrical systems are attached to household plumbing, corrosion and lead exposure may be greater. Customers can choose to pay to have an electrician check the house wiring. There are fees to have the evaluation performed.

Can home water treatment devices impact lead levels?

Illinois American Water takes steps to reduce the potential for lead to leach from your pipes into the water. This is accomplished by adding a corrosion inhibitor or by reducing the acidity of the water leaving our treatment facilities.

Certain home treatment devices, such as water softeners for example, might increase lead levels in your water.

Always consult the device manufacturer for information on potential impacts to your drinking water or household plumbing.