

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER

The city of Highland found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and children 6 years and younger. Please read this notice closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

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

The primary sources of lead exposure for most children are deteriorating lead-based paint, lead-contaminated dust, and lead-contaminated residential soil. Exposure to lead is a significant health concern, especially for young children and infants whose growing bodies tend to absorb more lead than the average adult. **Infants that drink formula prepared with lead-contaminated water are at a greater risk because of the large volume of water they drink relative to their body size.** Lead is rarely found in source water, but enters tap water through corrosion of plumbing materials. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures and solder.

Steps You Can Take To Reduce Your Exposure To Lead In Your Water

If the level of lead found in your drinking water is above 15 ppb or if you are concerned about the lead levels at your location, there are several things you can do:

- ***Run your water to flush out lead.*** If water hasn't been used for several hours, run water from your kitchen tap or whatever tap you use for drinking and cooking for **at least 3 minutes** and it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature before using it for drinking or cooking. This will help flush lead-containing water from the pipes. In order to conserve water, you can fill multiple containers after flushing for drinking, cooking, and preparing baby formula.
- ***Bottled drinking water should be used by pregnant women, breast-feeding women, young children, and formula-fed infants at homes where lead has been detected at levels greater than 15 ppb.***
- ***Use cold water for drinking, 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.
- ***Testing children.*** Parents may want to have their child's blood tested for lead.
- ***Do not boil water to remove lead.*** Boiling water will not reduce lead.
- ***Look for alternative sources or treatment of water.***

- ***Test your water for lead.*** Call us at the number below to find out how to get your water tested for lead.
- ***Identify if your plumbing fixtures contain lead.*** New brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as “lead-free,” may contribute lead to drinking water. As of June 19, 1986, new or replaced water serviced lines and new household plumbing materials could not contain more than 8% lead. Lead content was further reduced on January 4, 2014, when plumbing materials must now be certified as "lead-free" to be used (weighted average of wetted surface cannot be more than 0.25% lead). Consumers should be aware of this when choosing fixtures and take appropriate precautions.

What Happened? What is Being Done?

The city of Highland recently collected samples from specific residences to test for lead and copper in the water system. We asked residences to participate in the sampling from a list provided by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. Although most homes have below 1 part per billion detection levels, we found some sites with data results above the IEPA action level of 15 parts per billion. We must advise the public of our results and provide information to the public of the health effects, sources, and how to protect yourself. The Highland Water Treatment Plant has and will continue to use processes to prevent scaling and corrosion and reduce soluble lead and copper in potable water delivered to the consumer’s tap. Overall, the data does not indicate a system wide problem. Specific sites containing unusual levels are being monitored.

It is possible for older homes to have lead service lines. The City of Highland does not keep records of all of the water service lines. A licensed plumber can identify the type of service pipe for your home if you are unsure.

For more information, call Supervisor Gary Pugh, Highland Water Treatment Plant at 654-9321 or visit our website at www.highlandil.gov/departments/public_works/water__treatment__plant/index.php. For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA’s Web site at www.epa.gov/lead or contact your health care provider.

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