

**This feature from the Cambridge Water Department (CWD) explains simple steps to reduce exposure to lead in the drinking water. For additional information please call the Laboratory at 617-349-4780.**

- Lead Is Everywhere

Whether you live in an apartment or a single-family home, in an old or new neighborhood, lead is in your environment. It can be found in lead-based paint, soil, household dust, food, drinking water, and certain types of pottery, porcelain and pewter. Lead can pose a risk to your health if too much of it enters the body.

Most cases of lead contamination are from contact with peeling lead paint and lead paint dust. While lead in drinking water is rarely the single cause of lead contamination, it can increase a person's total body lead level.

- Lead And Your Health

Lead is stored in the body for many years. Excessive amounts of lead in the body can cause damage to the brain, red blood cells, and kidneys. The greatest risk is to young children and pregnant women, whose fetuses can be harmed by lead. Amounts of lead that won't hurt adults can slow down normal mental and physical development of growing bodies.

- Lead In Drinking Water

At the source of supply, the reservoirs, and leaving the water treatment plant Cambridge drinking water contains no lead. Lead enters the drinking water as pipes containing lead wear away and the metal dissolves in the water. Major sources of lead in drinking water are lead water service pipes that connect houses to water mains in the street, lead based solder used to join water pipes, chrome-plated brass faucets and other household plumbing containing lead.

Greater than 15 parts per billion of lead in drinking water is considered to be high by the Environmental Protection Agency. If the drinking water in your home contains more than this amount, the CWD recommends that you follow the precautions outlined below.

- Should I Buy Bottled Water?

Bottled water is not a solution because labels on bottled water do not generally say whether the water contains lead or other minerals.

Also, bottled water may cost as much as 100 times more than water from your faucet.

- Should I Get A Home Water Filtration System?

Most water filtration systems do not remove dissolved lead. A reverse osmosis system will remove dissolved lead, but it is expensive.

A less expensive option is to purchase a water filtration pitcher from your local hardware store. If used according to the instructions, these filters can reduce lead in drinking water by as much as 93 percent. Be sure to check the packaging of the filter to ensure that it is National Standards Foundation(NSF) certified for lead reduction.

- What Is Being Done To Control Lead In The Drinking Water?

The CWD has evaluated options for treating Cambridge's drinking water to reduce lead levels at the consumer's tap. Under federal law, this treatment was required by 1997. The CWD has had treatment in place since the Fall of 1995 and meets the federal requirements.

- Where Can I Get More Information About Lead In Drinking Water?

The Water Department may also be able to tell you whether your water service pipe is made of lead.

- Simple Steps To Reduce Exposure To Lead In Drinking Water

### 1. Test Your Drinking Water

2. The only way to determine the level of lead in your drinking water is to have the water tested by a state certified laboratory such as the Cambridge Water Department. CWD Laboratory will test Cambridge resident's water for free. Please call 349-4780 to make arrangements.

### 3. Flush Your System

4. The longer water remains in contact with plumbing materials containing lead, the greater the chance lead will dissolve into the water. Any time water has gone unused for more than six hours, run each faucet used for drinking or cooking for about a minute or until the water becomes cold. Use the flushed water from the faucet for washing dishes or watering plants.

### 5. Use Only Cold Water For Cooking And Drinking

6. Since hot water will dissolve lead more quickly than cold water, use only cold water for drinking, cooking, making baby formula and mixing juices. If you need hot water, heat cold water on the stove.

### 7. Replace Your Lead Water System Pipe

8. If your water service pipe is made of lead, the Water Department will replace your service for a nominal fee. The Water Department encourages you to replace the lead water service pipe which you own.

### 9. Remove Loose Lead Solder And Debris

10. Every few months remove the faucet aerator from each faucet in your home, and flush the pipes for about three to five minutes. This will remove loose lead solder and debris from the plumbing.

### 11. Have an Electrician Check Your Wiring

12. More lead may dissolve in the drinking water if wires from your electrical system are attached to a lead water service pipe. Ask a licensed electrician to check the wiring in your home. If the wiring is attached to the lead water service pipe, ask the electrician to relocate the wires.

DON'T change the wiring yourself, improper grounding can cause electrical shocks and fire hazards

### 13. Identify And Replace Plumbing Containing Excessive Amounts Of Lead

14. In 1986, Congress banned the use of solder containing greater than 0.2 percent lead for joining water pipes, and restricted the lead content of faucets and other plumbing materials to 8.0 percent. When having plumbing replaced in your home, make sure the plumber uses materials that conform to these standards.

- Other Sources Of Information

Lead-Safe Cambridge, 57 Inman Street, 2nd floor, Cambridge, MA 02139

Telephone 617-349-LEAD

Fax 617-349-4669

Cambridge Inspectional Services Prevention Program 349- 6100

Call the Prevention Program for information on how to have your child's blood tested for lead