

This will apply to Allegany County Water customers in the Bowling Green, Mexico Farms, Oldtown Road and Corriganville/Ellerslie areas:

What You Should Know About

LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER

Published by the City of Cumberland

An Important Message From Your Drinking Water Supplier

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the City of Cumberland are concerned about Lead in your drinking water. Although most homes have very low levels of lead in their drinking water, some homes in the community have Lead levels above the EPA action level of 0.015 milligrams per liter of water (mg/l). Under Federal law, the City is required to have in place a program to minimize Lead in your drinking water. The program includes corrosion control treatment, source water treatment and public education. The City will be initiating corrosion control treatment to make it less likely that lead will dissolve into the drinking water. The City is mandated to have optimum corrosion control treatment installed by May 11, 2008. Should you have any questions about how the City is carrying out the requirements of the Lead Regulation, please call the Environmental Specialist at 301.759.6604. This publication explains simple steps you can take to protect you and your family by reducing your exposure to Lead in drinking water.

Health Effects: Lead is a common metal found throughout the Environment in Lead based paint, air, soil, household dust, food, certain types of pottery porcelain and pewter and water. Lead can pose significant risk to your health if too much enters your body. Lead builds up in the body over many years and can cause damage to the brain, red blood cells and kidneys. The greatest risk is to young children and pregnant women. Amounts of lead that won't hurt adults can slow down normal mental and physical development of growing bodies. In addition, a child at play often comes into contact with sources of lead contamination--like dirt and dust--that rarely affect an adult. It is important to wash children's hands and toys often, and to try to make sure they only put food in their mouths.

How Lead Enters Our Drinking Water: Lead in drinking water, although rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning, can significantly increase a person's total lead exposure, particularly the exposure of infants who drink baby formulas and concentrated juices that are mixed with water. The EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead.

Lead seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like lakes and rivers. Lead in drinking water is typically a result of corrosion or wearing away of materials containing Lead in the water distribution system and household plumbing. The materials include Lead base solder used to join copper pipe, brass and chrome plated faucets and in some cases pipes made of Lead that connect your house to the water main. In 1986, Congress banned the use of Lead solder containing greater than 0.2% Lead and restricted the Lead content of faucets, pipes and other plumbing materials to 8.0%.

When water stands in pipes or plumbing systems containing Lead for several hours or more, the Lead in the pipes or solder may dissolve into your drinking water. This means first drawn water from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon after you return from work or school, can contain fairly high levels of Lead.

Steps to Take to Reduce Exposure to Lead: Despite our best efforts mentioned earlier to control water corrosivity and remove Lead from the water supply, Lead levels in some homes or buildings can be high. To find out whether you need to take action in your own home, have your drinking water tested to determine if it contains excessive concentrations of Lead. Testing the water is essential because you cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. Some local laboratories that can provide this service are listed at the end of this publication. For more information on having your water tested, please call the Environmental Specialist at 301.759.6604.

If a water test indicates that the drinking water drawn from a tap in your home contains lead above 0.015 mg/l, then you should take the following precautions:

Flush Your System: Let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. The longer water resides in your home's plumbing the more lead it may contain. Flushing the tap means running the cold water faucet until the water gets noticeably colder, usually about 15-30 seconds. Although toilet flushing or showering flushes water through a portion of your home's plumbing system, you still need to flush the water in each faucet before using it for drinking or cooking. Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your family's health. It usually uses less than one or two gallons of water and costs less than 25 cents per month. To conserve water, fill a couple of bottles for drinking water after flushing the tap, and whenever possible use the first flush water to wash the dishes or water the plants. If you live in a high-rise building, letting the water flow before using it may not work to lessen your risk from lead. The plumbing systems have more and sometimes larger pipes than smaller buildings. Ask your landlord for help in locating the source of the lead and for advice on reducing the lead level.

Use Only Cold Water for Cooking and Drinking: Hot water can dissolve more lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold tap and heat it on the stove.

Identify and Replace Lead Materials With Lead-Free Material: Remove loose lead solder and debris from the plumbing materials installed in newly constructed homes, or homes in which the plumbing has recently been replaced, by removing the faucet strainers from all taps and running the water from 3 to 5 minutes. Thereafter, periodically remove the strainers and flush out any debris that has accumulated over time.

If copper pipes are joined with lead solder that has been installed illegally since it was banned in 1986, notify the plumber who did the work and request that he or she replace the lead solder with lead-free solder. Lead solder looks dull gray, and when scratched with a key looks shiny. In addition, notify the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation and/or the Maryland Department of the Environment about the violation.

Have an electrician check your wiring: If grounding wires from the electrical system are attached to your pipes, corrosion may be greater. Check with a licensed electrician or your local electrical code to determine if your wiring can be grounded elsewhere. DO NOT attempt to change the wiring yourself because improper grounding can cause electrical shock and fire hazards.

The steps described above will reduce the Lead concentrations in drinking water. However, if a water test indicates that the drinking water coming from your tap contains Lead concentrations in excess of 0.015 mg/l after flushing, or after the City has completed their treatment enhancements to minimize Lead levels, then you may want to take the following additional measures:

Other Measures to Reduce Exposure to Lead:

Purchase or lease a home treatment device: Home treatment devices are limited in that each unit treats only the water that flows from the faucet to which it is connected, and all of the devices require periodic maintenance and replacement. Devices such as reverse osmosis systems or distillers can effectively remove lead from your drinking water. Some activated carbon filters may reduce lead levels at the tap, however all lead reduction claims should be investigated. Be sure to check the actual performance of a specific home treatment device before and after installing the unit.

Purchase bottled water for drinking and cooking.

Sources for additional information: Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects of lead. State and local government agencies that can be contacted include:

The Environmental Specialist for the City of Cumberland can be reached at 301.759.6604 and can provide you with information about your community's water supply and a list of local laboratories that have been certified by EPA for testing water quality.

The Cumberland Community Development Department can be reached at 301.759.6442 and can provide you with information about building permit records that should contain the names of plumbing contractors that plumbed your home.

The Maryland Department of the Environment Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 410-537-3859 or Allegany County Environmental Health can be reached at 301.759.5040 and can provide you with information about the health effects of Lead and how you can have your child's blood tested.

The following are State approved laboratories in your area that you can call to have your water tested for lead. The City contracts with Fairway Laboratories, Inc. and Mountain Research, Inc. Both laboratories are located in Altoona, PA and can be reached at 814.946.4306 or 814.949.2034, respectively.

What is Cumberland Doing About Lead in Your Drinking Water: The City's drinking water supply is essentially Lead-free and the City has no Lead service lines. The Lead that has shown up in testing most likely came from the corrosion of Lead-soldered joints and brass and chrome faucets in some of the homes tested. The City will be initiating corrosion control treatment in order to make it less likely that lead will dissolve into the drinking water.

For More Information: Should you have any questions about how the City is implementing the requirements of the Lead and Copper Regulation, or want more information about what you can do, please call the City's Environmental Specialist at 301.759.6604.

Other Water Distributions systems in your area include parts of Allegany County and the LaVale Sanitary Commission at 301.729.1638, Cresaptown Civic Improvement Association at 301.729.6981 and Allegany County Sanitary District at 301.777.5933.