

Public Education Notice

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER

The Watertown Water Department 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.

This notice is brought to you by the Watertown Water Department. State Water System ID# 2202346 Date December 9, 2016.

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

Lead is a common metal found in the environment. Drinking water is one possible source of lead exposure. The main sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust or soil, and some plumbing materials. In addition, lead can be found in certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, food, and cosmetics. Other sources include exposure in the work place and exposure from certain hobbies (lead can be carried on clothing or shoes).

New brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. The law currently allows end-use brass fixtures, such as faucets, with up to 8 percent lead to be labeled as "lead free." However, plumbing fixtures labeled National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) certified may only have up to 2 percent lead. Consumers should be aware of this when choosing fixtures and take appropriate precautions.

The City of Watertown has no records of lead service lines within its distribution system. When water is in contact with pipes [or service lines] or plumbing that contains lead for several hours, the lead may enter drinking water. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have plumbing containing lead. New homes may also have lead; even "lead-free" plumbing may contain some lead.

EPA estimates that 10 to 20 percent of a person's potential exposure to lead may come from drinking water. Infants who consume mostly formula mixed with lead-containing water can receive 40 to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water.

Don't forget about other sources of lead such as lead paint, lead dust, and lead in soil. Wash your children's hands and toys often as they can come into contact with dirt and dust containing lead.

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

1. ***Run your water to flush out lead.*** Run water for 15-30 seconds [or insert a different flushing time if your system has representative data indicating a different flushing time would better reduce lead exposure in your community. The State must approve the wording] or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature before using it for drinking or cooking, if it hasn't been used for several hours. This flushes lead-containing water from the pipes.
2. ***Use cold water for 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.
3. ***Do not boil water to remove lead.*** Boiling water will not reduce lead.
4. ***Look for alternative sources or treatment of water.*** You may want to consider purchasing bottled water or a water filter. Read the package to be sure the filter is approved to reduce lead or contact NSF International at 800-NSF-8010 or www.nsf.org for information on performance standards for water filters. Be sure to maintain and replace a filter device in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions to protect water quality.
5. ***Test your water for lead.*** Call us at (315) 785-7845 to find out how to get your water tested for lead. The City regularly samples from homes that had plumbing installed after 1982 that have copper pipes with lead solder joints. The sampling was conducted every 3 years, now the sampling will be once every 6 months. If your residence is not a sample site, you may contact an independent laboratory about having your home tested for lead. [Include information on your water system's testing program. For example, do you provide free testing? Are there labs in your area that are certified to do lead in water testing?]
6. ***Get your child tested.*** Contact your local health department or healthcare provider to find out how you can get your child tested for lead if you are concerned about exposure.
7. ***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. The law currently allows end-use brass fixtures, such as faucets, with up to 8% lead to be labeled as "lead free." Visit the National Sanitation Foundation Web site at www.nsf.org to learn more about lead-containing plumbing fixtures.

What Happened? What is Being Done?

During the 2016 lead and copper sampling schedule, the City of Watertown exceeded the 15 ppb action level for lead. Of the 30 samples collected 4 samples had a lead level greater than 15 ppb placing the 90th percentile at 16 ppb. The source of lead is typically from the interior plumbing of the residences that were plumbed with copper pipes and lead solder joints. When water is allowed to dwell in these pipes for long periods lead and copper will leach into the water where it can be ingested. The City of Watertown adds a corrosion inhibitor, sodium silicate, that forms a protective barrier to prevent the leaching of lead and copper from the pipes. This protective barrier can become eroded when water is allowed to remain stagnant within pipes for extensive periods of time thus not allowing the replenishment of the inhibitor. The decay of the protective barrier will result in elevated lead and copper samples. This is why it is important to remember to run your water for a couple of minutes prior to consuming, especially when the water has not been used for long periods of time.

The City has no services that are constructed of lead. Lead gooseneck connections were used as a trial in 1923, by 1928 all connections were of copper pipe.

The City of Watertown has not exceeded the 90th percentile action level for lead since the inception of the sampling plan began in 1992. Lead and copper levels have marginally fluctuated from sample to sample session but never exceeded the action level.

The City remains committed to the control and mitigation of lead and copper within the distribution system. The use of sodium silicate has shown to be an effective control of lead and copper in the past, and will continue to be so in the future.

At this time the City will increase the intensity of the lead and copper sampling program by sampling for lead and copper once every six months at 60 locations for the next year to determine if there is truly a problem and identify the corrective measures.

For More Information

Call us at (315)785-7845. For more information on lead in drinking water contact your local health department at, Public Health Services Department, 531 Meade Street, Watertown, NY, (315)786-3770, email, www.co.jefferson.ny.us, 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.state.ny.us. 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 call the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-LEAD.