

Lead in Plumbing & Drinking Water Safety

Lead testing completed by Manitowoc Public Utilities (MPU) has found lead levels in some homes above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) action limit. MPU continuously addresses this health concern and is committed to informing and educating its customers about lead.

MPU began conducting routine monitoring for lead in drinking water in 1992. Historically, the lead levels have been below the EPA action limit of 15 parts per billion (ppb), or 0.015 milligrams per liter (mg/L).

MPU's source water, water mains, and finished drinking water do not contain lead. When water is in contact with pipes (or service lines) and plumbing containing lead for several hours, the lead may enter drinking water. Homes built before 1950 are more likely to have lead pipes, and homes built prior to 1984 could have lead solder. MPU has taken the following actions to address lead in drinking water:

- Re-evaluated our existing corrosion control program, put in place in 1994, to reduce lead impacts.
- Developed an improved water distribution flushing program to remove minerals and sediment from water mains, which will help improve and control corrosion of lead piping.
- Developed a program to encourage homeowners to replace their lead service lines and implemented a Lead Service Line Replacement Loan Program.



More Information

For more tips and information on drinking water safety and lead, please visit the following websites:

<https://www.mpu.org/lead>

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm>

<https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water>

If you have questions about lead in drinking water call MPU at (920) 683-4600. Or if you have questions about lead testing or the health effects, contact the Manitowoc County Health Department at (920) 683-4155.

Contact Us

Online

www.mpu.org

Customer Service

920-683-4600

mpucustomerservice@mpu.org

Report an Outage

Electric: 920-683-4622

Water: 920-683-4633

Diggers Hotline

Quick Dial: 8-1-1

Toll Free: 1-800-242-8511

Emergency: 1-877-500-9592

Address

Main Office

1303 S. 8th Street

Manitowoc, WI 54220

Mailings

Office

PO Box 1090

Manitowoc, WI 54220

Customer Service

PO Box 1087

Manitowoc, WI 54220

Office Hours

Monday - Friday: 8am-4:30pm



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Manitowoc Public Utilities

Lead Awareness and Drinking Water Safety

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Lead and My Health

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters the body from drinking water and other sources. Lead can be found in many products and locations. The most common source is dust and chips from lead based paint used in toys, furniture, and older homes.

Lead absorbed by the lungs and the digestive tract enter the bloodstream, where it distributes to all tissues of the body. Excessive levels of lead can damage the brain, kidneys, nervous system, red blood cells, and reproductive system. Young children, infants, and fetuses appear to be most vulnerable. The degree of harm is directly related to the level of lead in the blood. Some harmful effects are reversible if exposure is reduced, while others can be permanent.

Lead used in service lines and interior plumbing is a health concern. MPU takes measures to prevent leaching from lead plumbing materials into your water. Older homes may be more at risk than others. MPU recommends you have your service line and interior plumbing inspected by a licensed plumber or home inspector for lead pipes, lead solder, or lead fixtures.

The following conditions will help determine if your drinking water is exposed to lead plumbing.

- About 5,600 homes in Manitowoc were built before 1950 and may have lead pipes in part of the water service. The lead pipe may appear in the basement where the service enters the building, but could be hidden in the yard between the house and the street.
- Water service lines and household plumbing that are dull gray in color and are soft enough to be scratched with a house key are lead.
- Homes with copper pipes built before September 1984 may have lead in the solder used to connect pipes. Lead solder was banned after this time.
- Plumbing and fixtures installed before January 1, 2014, or purchased from sources outside of the US may contain lead. Since that date, only lead-free fixtures and fittings are allowed to be installed or used to repair drinking water plumbing.
- Research shows that disturbances to the ground near lead service lines can temporarily increase the lead levels in drinking water by dislodging lead-containing particles. This is why MPU requires the full lead service line to be replaced when water mains are replaced.

Is Your Home At-Risk?

There are several easy things you can do to reduce your exposure to lead in drinking water. These actions are particularly important if pregnant or breastfeeding women or children under the age of six live in your home.

- **Flush your plumbing.** Before using tap water for drinking or cooking, flush your plumbing by running the kitchen faucet (or any other tap you take drinking or cooking water from) on cold until the water stream is noticeably colder, then another full minute. This is especially important if your water has been sitting in your pipes and service line for more than six hours.

Showering, doing laundry and flushing the toilet all help clear water from the pipes that may contain lead. Bathing, showering and doing laundry in water from lead service lines or lead plumbing is safe. To conserve water, you can reserve the flushed water and use for watering household plants or outdoor plants.

You may also want to consider filling a clean container(s) with water from the flushed tap, and reserving this water for drinking, cooking, or other consumption.

- **Use only cold water for cooking and drinking.** Water from the hot water tap can dissolve lead more easily than cold water. Boiling water will not reduce the amount of lead in your drinking or cooking water. In fact, boiling can concentrate the lead in water. You can also consider, if desired, purchasing bottled water from a known lead-free source for drinking and cooking.
- **Inspect and clean all faucet aerators.** On the end of your faucet is a screen that can catch debris, including particles of lead. Periodically remove the aerator and rinse out any debris before reinstalling the aerator.
- **Purchase a faucet-mount or pour-through pitcher/carafe filter.** Home drinking water filters can reduce or eliminate lead. Be sure to look for products certified by NSF/ANSI under Standard 53 for removal of lead and follow any manufacturer's guidelines on installation and maintenance of the product. Information about these products can be found at www.nsf.org by typing in "lead filters" in the search bar
- **Replace your lead service line and any interior plumbing containing lead.** In the City of Manitowoc, the entire water service line (from the watermain to the home) is owned by the property owner. When a water service needs to be replaced, it is the responsibility of the property owner. A lead pipe is shiny when scraped with a screwdriver, and a magnet will not stick to it. (Galvanized steel pipe is dull when scraped and a magnet will stick to it.) Replacement must be done by a licensed plumber under contract from the homeowner.

In addition, the Center for Disease Control recommends all children under the age of six be tested at least once for lead poisoning. Pregnant or breastfeeding women at risk for lead poisoning should also be tested for lead in their blood. Lead has no beneficial role in the body and there is no minimum lead level that does not cause effects. Most lead poisoned people do not look or act sick.

The Manitowoc County Health Department recommends that children who are at risk for lead poisoning should be tested at age one and age two. Children up to age 6 should have a blood lead test if there is no record of a previous test. Risks for lead poisoning include living in or frequent visits to a house built prior to 1978 or having a sibling or playmate diagnosed with lead poisoning. Pregnant or breastfeeding women who were exposed to lead at an early age or are at risk of lead exposure due to their environment, occupation, or hobbies should also get tested. Testing is available at your doctor's office or at the Manitowoc County Health Department.

