

## ***How can I tell if my water has too much lead?***

You cannot see, smell, or taste lead. However, you can have your household water tested for an average cost of \$20 to \$30 per sample. Contact Saint Paul Regional Water at 651-266-6350 for a list of laboratories certified by the Minnesota Department of Health to test for lead in your water.

Testing is especially important in high-rise buildings, where letting the water run may not help with a potential lead problem. If the test shows too much lead in your water, contact your landlord to help you find the source of the problem.

## ***Will water treatment devices help?***

Some treatment devices can reduce the amount of lead in your drinking water. Reverse osmosis and distillation units can be used for that purpose. Since these devices also soften water, however, they should only be installed at the faucet. They can be expensive, and they must be maintained regularly to work well.

A few types of water filters also remove lead. Check the product literature to be sure it has been certified by the National Sanitation Foundation for lead removal. Water softeners can reduce the lead entering your home; however, water softened in the home absorbs lead from pipes more quickly. Home water softeners should not be used in parts of your plumbing system that supply drinking water taps.

## ***Saint Paul Regional Water Services is taking the lead in getting the lead out by:***

- testing our raw source water as well as treated water for lead content
- treating the water in the system to reduce the amount of lead absorbed from plumbing
- conducting a public education program about lead
- offering a lead assessment program to property owners to make it easier financially to replace lead services on their property
- replacing lead service lines in the water supply system
- replacing lead service connections in the utility's supply system at an aggressive pace

## ***Other questions about lead?***

*The following agencies can also answer your questions about lead contamination and related health issues:*

***Minnesota Department of Health***  
**651-215-5800**

***Saint Paul Public Health***  
**651-266-1280**

***EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline***  
**1-800-426-4791**

*Or you can find out more about lead in drinking water at:*

**[www.epa.gov/safewater](http://www.epa.gov/safewater)**

# Let it run...



# And get the lead out



**Saint Paul Regional  
Water Services**

**651-266-6350**

# What you need to know about lead

## Testing for lead . . .

Water supply systems all over the country are testing their water for lead. This testing is required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as part of the federal Safe Drinking Water program.

Water tested in the Saint Paul water system meets all state and federal requirements for maximum levels of lead. Even so, water in certain homes may still contain undesirable amounts of lead.

## How does lead get into household water?

Usually, lead gets into your water after it leaves your local treatment plant. The most likely sources of lead in your household water are lead pipes, lead solder, or brass fixtures in your plumbing. In older communities, lead service lines may connect your home with the water mains under the street. When water stays in pipes for many hours, it can absorb small amounts of lead from the plumbing.

## Why is lead a problem?

If it is inhaled or swallowed, lead can build up in the body over time. If too much lead enters the body, it can damage the brain, nervous system, red blood cells, and kidneys. In addition to household water, lead is found in products such as some types of food, pottery, pewter and, of course, lead-based paint. Lead is a common metal that is found in air, soil, household dust, as well as water.

## Why are children and pregnant women at greater risk?

Amounts of lead that won't hurt an adult can be very harmful to a child. Smaller bodies absorb lead more rapidly. Children also are more likely to be exposed to lead in the first place. They may come into contact with possible sources of lead—like dust and dirt—more easily when they play.



Even though drinking water is only one possible source of lead, it can be a special problem for infants, whose diets may consist mostly of liquids mixed with water, like formulas or concentrated juices.

A child's mental and physical growth can be harmed permanently from ingesting too much lead. Thus, pregnant women also should be concerned about the levels of lead in their water.

## What can I do to reduce lead in my water?

Saint Paul Regional Water is taking steps to reduce the lead in your drinking water. But you can also do things to protect your health.

### Let it run!

Do not drink or cook with water that has collected in your plumbing for more than six hours — overnight, for example, or while you are at work. You can clear the water out of your pipes by letting the water run from a cold water faucet for three to five minutes. Run the water before you take drinking water from any faucet in the house.



Showering will not clear out water from the water at the sink, for example. Letting the water run will usually reduce lead to acceptable levels. Typically, this will add no more than a few cents a month to your water bill. But the water you clear from your faucet does not have to be wasted. You can use it for washing dishes or watering plants.

### Do not use hot water directly from the faucet for cooking.

Because hot water dissolves lead more quickly than cold water, try not to use water from your hot water faucet for cooking or drinking. If you need hot water, take it from the cold tap and heat it on the stove. *It is especially important not to use hot tap water for making baby formula.*

For a list of laboratories certified by the Minnesota Department of Health to test for lead in your water, call:



**Customer Service**  
**Saint Paul Regional**  
**Water Services**  
**651-266-6350**