

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

Lead Water Service Pipes in Homes Built Before 1955

If your house or apartment was built before 1955 and it is connected to the municipal water supply, you should take these steps:

1. Check your water service to see if it is made of lead. The water service is the pipe that brings water into your house from the water main. Lead pipes are dull grey in colour but are shiny silver when scratched with a knife or key. They are softer than copper pipes and can be easily scratched.

If you are not sure if your service is lead you can call for a free inspection from Hamilton Public Works. Please call (905) 546-4426 and ask for a Check Size and Type Inspection.

2. If your water service is made of lead, follow these instructions:
 - Children **under 6 years of age, pregnant women, or women planning a pregnancy** should use the following water for drinking, making foods, juice, coffee, or tea.
 - Bottled water, or
 - Tap water with an approved filter attached to your tap
****Read important filter information on next page****
 - Children **6 years of age and older and adults** can use tap water for drinking and cooking, but before doing so, the drinking tap must be flushed as described below.
 - **Flush** your drinking water by running the cold tap in your kitchen for at least 5 minutes. This should be done before use every morning or any time your water has not been used for 6 hours or longer. Do this before drinking, making foods, juice, coffee, or tea.
 - **Test** your drinking water for lead. This test is available free by calling Hamilton Public Works at (905) 546-4426. If you live in an older apartment building your superintendent can call to have this test done. If your water passes the test it is OK for everyone to drink water straight from the tap but you must flush your water lines every day to keep lead levels low.

Important Notes

Boiling your tap water will not remove lead. Do not use water from the hot water tap for cooking or drinking.

Tap water is safe for bathing, showering, brushing teeth, washing dishes and clothes even if you have a lead water pipe.

Bottled Water does not usually contain Fluoride. Check the label for “F” if you want to use bottled water with fluoride in it, or call your dentist and ask about steps you should take to ensure the dental health of your family.

Water Filters approved by the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) are needed. The box for these filters must state: NSF Standard 53 “lead removal” or “health effects”. These filters attach to the tap or can be installed directly into your plumbing.

Pitcher or countertop style filters do not remove enough lead. Some older pitcher-style filter packages found in stores may state that they meet NSF Standard 53 for lead removal. These no longer meet the latest NSF testing standards. NSF Standard 53 filters will not remove fluoride.

Money for low-income families to buy a NSF Standard 53 filter is available from City of Hamilton Special Supports. First you must test your water to see if lead levels are high. For more information or to apply, please call (905) 546-2590.

Replacing Your Lead Water Service Line or Pipe

This is the best way to reduce lead in your tap water. It is also the most costly. For more information on the Lead Service Replacement Program visit www.hamilton.ca/water or call the City of Hamilton at (905) 546-2489.

Loans for Replacing Your Lead Water Line or Pipe

City of Hamilton Council approved a pilot loan program to give eligible residential property owners a repayable 10 year interest bearing loan to cover specific costs to replace lead water service lines or pipes. This program ends on October 31, 2008. For details, please visit www.hamilton.ca/water or call the City of Hamilton at (905) 546-2489.

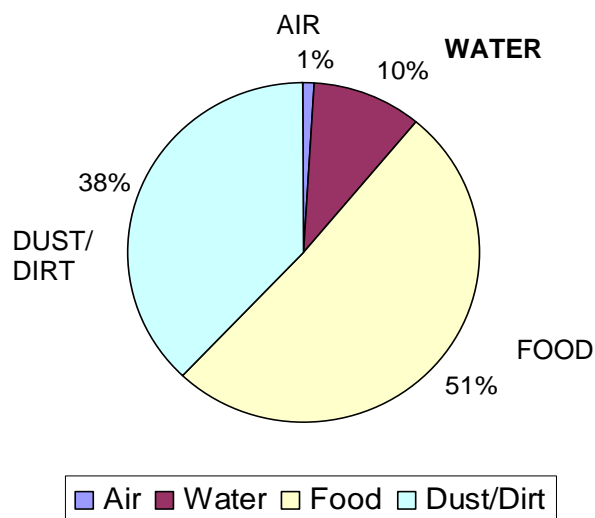
What is lead?

Lead is a soft, naturally occurring metal. It can harm people, especially young children, when they eat or drink too much of it. In the past lead has been used in paint, water pipes, plumbing solder, gasoline, ceramics and pottery, and crystal glassware.

Common Sources of Lead

- Dust and Soil: lead can be in soil or dirt outside and can blow or be tracked into the home. Lead can also be in older houses and released when lead-based paints are disturbed during renovations.
- Food: lead has been found in foods that were grown in areas with a high soil lead content. Canned foods are not a concern. The contribution of food to our lead exposure is believed to be decreasing.
- Tap Water: lead can be found in tap water in houses with lead water supply pipes, or lead solder in the plumbing. The highest levels of lead in tap water are found in homes with lead service pipes.

% of Total Lead Intake (2 Year Old Child)



Health Canada, 1992

Health Effects of Lead

Symptoms of long-term exposure to low levels of lead can be very subtle, and can include fatigue, insomnia, headaches, gastrointestinal upsets, irritability and kidney disease, as well as learning and behavioural problems in children. Other symptoms may include high blood pressure, anemia and damage to the peripheral nervous system.

Lead is also a potential human carcinogen. Lead builds up in certain body tissues and organs, and is toxic to the central nervous system (CNS). Adverse health effects can occur from short-term exposure to high levels of lead, or long-term exposure to low levels of lead. Children, fetuses and pregnant women are most at risk of adverse health effects from lead exposure because lead can cross the placenta, and the blood brain barriers and CNS of young children still developing in the early years of life.