

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN SPRWS DRINKING WATER

Introduction

Saint Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS) is working diligently to reduce lead exposure from drinking water and has recently completed lead testing in our service area. SPRWS found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Please read this information closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

What Did We Find?

SPRWS analyzed tap water samples from homes and buildings in our service area for lead. Thirteen of the samples taken were above 15 parts per billion, the Environmental Protection Agency's action level for lead.

Sources of Lead

Lead is rarely found in natural sources of water such as rivers and lakes or underground aquifers. You may be in contact with lead through paint, water, dust, soil, food, hobbies, or your job. The most common way for Minnesotans to come in contact with lead is through lead-based paint flakes/chips and dust found in the windows of homes built before 1978.

Homes built before 1946 may have lead service lines that connect them to public water. Plumbing systems built before 1986 may have lead parts. New "lead free" pipes and plumbing parts may still contain 0.25 percent lead. Brass parts may also contain some lead. Note that many faucets are made of brass even if they do not have a "brass" color. The amount of lead that gets into drinking water depends on many factors, such as the amount of lead in plumbing materials, water chemistry, and water usage.

How Can I Reduce My Exposure to Lead in Water?



- **Clean your aerator.** At least once a quarter, remove your aerator from your drinking water faucet and rinse out the filter to remove any small particles.



- **Let the water run** before using it for drinking or cooking. If you have a lead service line, let the water run for 3-5 minutes. If you do not have a lead service line, let the water run for 30-60 seconds. The more time water has been sitting in your home's pipes, the more lead it may contain.



- **Use cold water** for drinking, cooking, and preparing baby formula. Hot water absorbs more lead from pipes than cold water. Boiling water does not reduce lead levels and may actually increase them.



- **Test your water at SPRWS or one of the many laboratories that offer this service:**

- SPRWS offers free water testing to residents in our service area. Please contact us at 651-266-6350 for information on obtaining a water sample container for testing.

- Search for Accredited Laboratories at:
<https://elddo.web.health.state.mn.us/public/accreditedlabs/labsearch.seam>



- **Treat your water** or find an alternative source if a test shows your water has high levels of lead:

- <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/factsheet/hometreatment.html>



- **Get your child tested.** Contact your local health department or doctor to find out how you can get your child tested for lead if you are concerned about exposure.

- Find out more information about child lead poisoning prevention:
<https://data.web.health.state.mn.us/lead>



What is SPRWS doing about Lead?

SPRWS is working to minimize lead exposure in a variety of ways:

1. **LEAD FREE SPRWS:** In 2023 SPRWS launched an ambitious 10-year plan to remove all lead service lines at no cost to customers. At project start, there were about 26,000 homes with lead service lines.
2. **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:** If Saint Paul property owners would like to replace their lead service line sooner than Lead Free SPRWS will be in their area, SPRWS offers a lead assessment program. This allows customers to hire a licensed plumbing contractor to complete the work within private property and pay for it via a 20-year, low-interest assessment through SPRWS. SPRWS will then replace the public portion if it is lead, typically within the same construction season.
3. **CORROSION CONTROL:** SPRWS uses a process, known as corrosion control, to treat the water to minimize leaching when interacting with lead. This creates a protective scale on the inside of the pipe between the water and the lead. We are actively working to implement enhanced corrosion control by January 2024 to further reduce lead leaching into drinking water.

We will complete an additional round of sampling in early 2024 to monitor the effectiveness of the newly implemented corrosion control improvements.

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 it can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body.
- 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.
- **The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women**
- During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.
- Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children.

For More Information



Call us at 651-266-6820



Email us at lead@stpaul.gov



Visit our website at stpaul.gov/water/lead



For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit <http://www.epa.gov/lead> or contact your doctor.