Cleaning a faucet aerator

The aerator is the assembly and screen the water passes through as it leaves the faucet. Tiny particles can get caught on the screen of the aerator. These particles may contain lead. To clean the aerator:

- Remove the aerator, turning it clockwise. You might need a pliers or a wrench.
- Keep the parts in the order you replaced them.
- Rinse the pieces and brush off any particles.
- If there is a mineral build up or rust, soak the parts in vinegar and brush with a toothbrush.
- Replace any broken parts.
- Put the assembly back together.

More information

For more information on lead in drinking water go to these sources:

- For more information on lead in drinking water, read our brochure Get the Lead Out. Go to www.stpaul.gov/water and scroll to publications on the right hand side. Select Get the Lead Out. For a hard copy, call customer service at 651-266-6350.

- For a copy of our annual water quality report, which contains information on the lead levels in our water, go to www.stpaul.gov/waterquality. For a hard copy, contact customer service at 651-266-6350.

- For more extensive information on lead in general, go the Minnesota Department of Health’s website at www.health.state.mn.us/lead.

- To get your water tested for lead, contact our water quality lab at 651-266-1635.

- To get more information on replacing your water service line, call our engineering service desk at 651-266-6270.
Lead Service Lines

Saint Paul Regional Water Services has about 14,000 lead service lines in the public right-of-way in its service area. A service line runs from the house to the street, connecting the water from the water main to the home.

The number of lead service lines in private homeowner property is unknown. Homes built before 1927 have lead service lines along with some homes built between the years 1944 and 1947.

Generally speaking, it is assumed that the homes that have public right-of-way lead service lines also have lead in the private service line.

How Do I Know if I Have Lead?

Lead pipes are a dull gray in color and are soft enough to scratch easily with a house key. A magnet will not stick to a lead pipe. A licensed plumber can help you determine if your household plumbing is made of lead.

Why does it matter?

Lead from lead service lines can leach into drinking water. Water that has been sitting a long time could pick up trace elements of lead from the service lines, especially if it has been sitting for more than six hours, like overnight.

SPRWS treats the water to reduce the exposure to lead in drinking water by monitoring and adjusting the pH levels and the alkalinity of the water, reducing the leaching of lead into the water.

Can I Replace my Lead Service Line?

Yes. You can always replace your lead service line. If your property is located in St. Paul, you can have the cost of the lead service line replacement assessed to your property taxes.

Must I Replace My Lead Service Line?

The only time a lead service line must be replaced is if it is leaking. Otherwise, no, the decision to replace a lead service line is up to the homeowner.

What is a partial lead service replacement?

When only one section, either the private or public end, of the lead service line gets replaced.

What do I need to know?

When only a portion of a lead service line is replaced, the construction work can cause pieces of the scale coating the lead service line to flake off, exposing that portion of the lead line to drinking water. When the lead line is cut and reconnected to copper, the lead line is exposed to drinking water. This fresh exposure can allow lead to leach into the drinking water.

The construction work can also release particles of lead into the drinking water.

Lead can be harmful. It can impact normal physical and mental development in babies and young children, cause deficits in attention span, hearing, and learning abilities of children, and increase blood pressure in adults.

What precautions can I take?

SPRWS recommends flushing out the entire house after a partial lead service line replacement. Starting at the basement, turn on the faucets one by one. After about 10 minutes, starting at the top of the house, turn off the faucets one by one, ending at the basement.

Once the house has been flushed, clean out the aerators on any faucets and then do so once a month for six months after a lead service line replacement.

Flush your cold water line any time you have not used any water for six hours or more. Run the cold water for 3-5 minutes.

For your convenience, SPRWS is providing a filtered water pitcher to all homes that have had a partial lead service line replacement, along with filters to last up to six months. Use the water pitcher for drinking and cooking water for the entire six months following a lead service line replacement.