

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

You cannot see, smell or taste lead. However, you can have your household tested. Contact SPRWS at 651.266.6350 for a list of Minnesota Department of Health certified laboratories to have your water tested.

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



Will home water treatment devices help?

Some treatment devices that can reduce the amount of lead in drinking water include reverse osmosis and distillation units. However, these devices also soften water, so they should be installed at the faucet. They can be expensive and require regular maintenance to work well.

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

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
- 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

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 at
www.epa.gov/safewater*

Keeping Lead Out

Information about lead in water



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?

Lead usually gets into water after it leaves the treatment plant. Most likely, sources like lead pipes, lead solder and brass fixtures are within homes. In older communities, lead service lines may connect homes to water mains under the street. When water stays in pipes for extended periods of time, it can absorb small amounts of lead.



Why is lead a problem?

If inhaled or swallowed, lead builds up in the body over time. If too much is consumed, it can damage the brain, nervous system, red blood cells and kidneys. In addition to household water, lead can be found in pottery, pewter, some types of food and of course, lead-based paint. Lead is a common metal that is found in air, soil, and 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. Drinking water is only one source of lead. Children may also come in contact with other sources – like dust and dirt – when they play.

For infants whose diets consist mostly of liquids mixed with water, lead is a special problem. Mental and physical growth can be harmed permanently from ingesting too much lead for children of all ages. Thus, pregnant women should also be concerned about levels of lead.



If you have any questions, call
SPRWS Customer service:
651.266.6350

What can I do to reduce lead in water?

Saint Paul Regional Water Services works around the clock to reduce lead in your drinking water, but here are some easy tips that can ensure clean water for you and your family.

- Clear your pipes – let cold water run from your faucet for 3-5 minutes to clear water
- Do not drink or cook with water that has collected in your plumbing for more than 6 hours (for example, overnight)
- Showering will not clear your drinking water pipes – make sure you run from any drinking water faucet
- Do not use hot water directly from the faucet because lead dissolves lead more quickly in hot water
This is especially important when making baby formula

The water you let run out of your pipes doesn't have to go to waste. It can be used for washing or watering plants. Running the water out of your pipes only adds a few cents to you water bill and ensures you have clean drinking water!

