



Water Customers Guide to Lead (Pb) Safety

Birmingham Water Works (BWW) treats, tests, and distributes high-quality drinking water to you and the community. Water provided by BWW is lead-free when it leaves our treatment plants and gets distributed through water mains to customers. After water is delivered through a water main, it may be exposed to lead as it flows through privately-owned water service lines and indoor plumbing and fixtures. BWW treats its water to help prevent pipe corrosion, and routinely tests water at multiple sites throughout the entire water distribution system to ensure it is working.

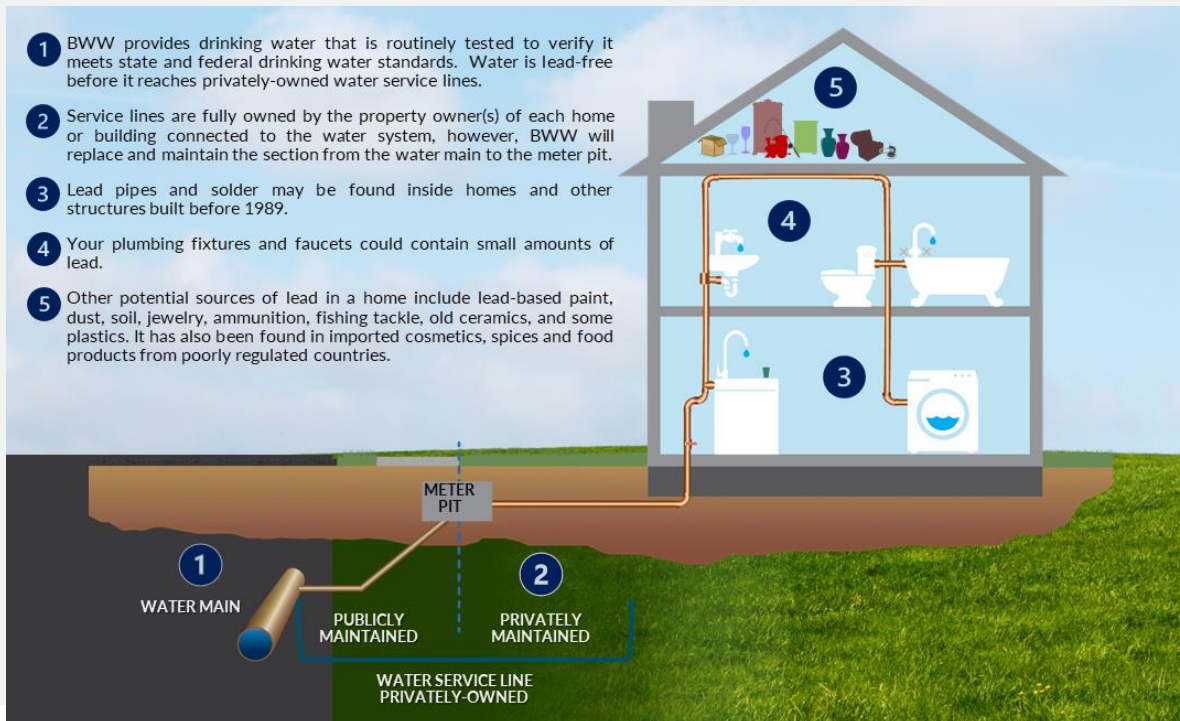
BWW takes the issue of lead in drinking water very seriously, and we offer this fact sheet to help you identify potential sources of lead in your home, learn how lead can affect your health, and most importantly, know how to maintain high-quality water and reduce exposure to lead.

Potential Sources of Lead

Lead is a naturally-occurring metal that has been used in many residential and industrial products, meaning we may be exposed to it at work or at home. Historically, lead was considered a good material for plumbing because it easily forms into different shapes and resists leaks. It is possible homes built before 1989 may have lead service lines, connectors, and plumbing materials that contain lead including solder, brass fittings and faucets. Lead may also be found in old paint and other products in the home. See the illustration below for more information about potential sources of lead in drinking water.

Exposure to Lead Can Affect Your Health

Exposure to lead in drinking water can cause serious health effects in all age groups. Infants and children can have decreases in IQ and attention span. Lead exposure can lead to new learning and behavior problems or exacerbate existing learning and behavior problems. The children of women who are exposed to lead before or during pregnancy can have increased risk of these adverse health effects. Adults can have increased risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, kidney or nervous system problems. Lead poisoning can also cause joint and muscle pain, memory issues, mood disorders, lower fertility and miscarriages, fatigue and hearing loss.



Learn more at bwwb.org/water



Simple Tips

To reduce lead exposure in your home

Test your water if you are concerned about lead in your drinking water. Customers can request a free water test from BWW.

Inspect your in-home water treatment devices, including water softeners and replace filters following manufacturer's recommendations. They may store and release lead into your water if not maintained properly.

Filter your water. Use a water filter that is ANSI/NSF 53 certified for lead removal. Many filters and filter systems can improve water quality and taste in other ways too. Visit nsf.org for more information.

Always use cold tap water for drinking and preparing food. Lead may settle and concentrate in hot water tanks. Hot water is more likely to dissolve lead from solder and brass fittings.

Regularly clean faucet aerators. Aerators can collect particles from lead plumbing and should be removed and cleaned on a regular basis. It is especially important after household plumbing work and repairs. After removing the aerator, flush the cold-water lines for 5 minutes.

Flush your tap for at least 5 minutes before drinking or cooking if the water in the faucet has gone unused for more than 6 hours. This will prevent consuming water that has sat exposed to any lead. If you have a known lead service line and your house is set far back from the street, you may need to flush longer. After flushing, use the water for cooking or drinking, and consider saving some in pitchers to reduce the number of times flushing is needed for drinking water throughout the day.

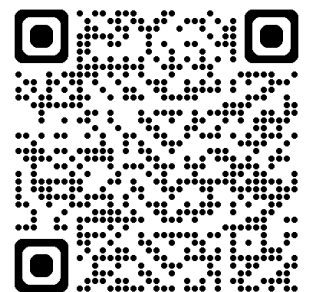
Install lead-free faucets and fixtures that are certified to contain no lead. Look for lead certification marks indicating the new product is lead-free, and then replace old faucets and fixtures. Visit nepis.epa.gov and search for lead-free certification for more information.

Ensure other sources of lead in your home have been removed or properly managed. Consider having your home checked for paint made before 1978, and faucets installed before 1989. Test and remove (or restrict access to) other household items that could contain lead. Be wary of poorly regulated products from overseas, including plastics, beauty products and spices. Check the [CDC website](http://www.cdc.gov) to learn about food and consumer products recalled for lead.

Additional Resources:

- EPA Resource providing an online step-by-step guide to help people identify lead pipes in their homes. www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/protect-your-tap-quick-check-lead
- CDC Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention, includes descriptions of other lead sources in the home, <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/default.htm>
- Alabama Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program <https://alabamapublichealth.gov/aclppp>
- Lead Hotline: 1 (800) 424-LEAD [5323]

bwwb.org/water



To learn more, visit bwwb.org/water
or call our Water Quality Team
Ph. (205) 244-4375
8 AM – 4:30 PM Monday - Friday

BWW is committed to providing safe drinking water to its residents, and our staff work hard to keep that commitment. We are ready to work with you to answer your questions about water quality, avoiding lead exposure, and replacing plumbing and fixtures that may contain lead (Pb).