

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and [insert your water system name] are concerned about lead in your drinking water. Some drinking water samples taken from this facility have lead levels above the TCEQ action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb), or 0.015 milligrams of lead per liter of water (mg/L). Under Federal law, we are required to have a program in place to minimize lead in your drinking water by [insert date when corrosion control will be completed for your system].

This program includes:

1. Corrosion control treatment (treating the water to make it less likely that lead will dissolve into the water);
2. Source water treatment (removing any lead that is in the water at the time it leaves our treatment facility); and
3. A public education program.

If you have any questions about how we are carrying out the requirements of the lead regulation please give us a call at [insert water system's phone number here].

This brochure also explains the simple steps you can take to protect yourself by reducing your exposure to lead in drinking water.

## HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEAD

Lead is found throughout the environment in lead-based paint, air, soil, household dust, food, certain types of pottery porcelain and pewter, and water. Lead can pose a significant risk to your health if too much of it enters your body.

Lead builds up in the body over many years and can cause damage to the brain, red blood cells and kidneys. The greatest risk is to young children and pregnant women. Amounts of lead that won't hurt adults can slow down normal mental and physical development of growing bodies. In addition, a child at play often comes into contact with sources of lead contamination - like dirt and dust - that rarely affect an adult. It is important to wash children's hands and toys often, and to try to make sure they only put food in their mouths.

## LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

Lead in drinking water, although rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning can significantly increase a person's total lead exposure, particularly the exposure of infants who drink baby formulas and concentrated juices that are mixed with water. TCEQ estimates that drinking water can make up 20% or more of a person's total exposure to lead.

## HOW LEAD ENTERS OUR WATER

Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminants in that it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like rivers and lakes. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of the corrosion, or wearing away, of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and household plumbing. These materials include lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, brass and chrome-plated brass faucets, and in some cases, pipes made of lead that connect houses and buildings to water mains (service lines). In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing greater than 0.2% lead, and restricted the lead content of pipes and plumbing fixtures to 8.0%.

When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems containing lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon if the water has not been used all day, can contain fairly high levels of lead.

## STEPS TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

### 1. FLUSH YOUR SYSTEM.

Let the water run from the tap before drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than 6 hours. The longer water resides in plumbing the more lead it may contain. Flush the cold water faucet for about 15-30 seconds. Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your health. It usually uses less than 1 or 2 gallons of water.

### 2. USE ONLY COLD WATER FOR COOKING AND DRINKING.

Do not cook with, or drink water from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve more lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold tap and then heat it.

### 3. REMOVE LOOSE SOLDER AND DEBRIS FROM PLUMBING MATERIALS.

Remove loose solder and debris from the plumbing materials installed in newly constructed homes, or homes in which the plumbing has recently been replaced. To do this, remove the faucet strainers from all taps and run the water from 3-5 minutes. Thereafter, periodically remove the strainers and flush out any debris that has accumulated over time.

### 4. IDENTIFY AND REPLACE LEAD SOLDER.

If your copper pipes are joined with lead solder that has been installed illegally since it was banned in 1986, notify the plumber who did the work and request that he or she replace the lead solder with lead-free solder. Lead solder looks dull gray, and when scratched with a key looks shiny. In addition, notify your **Texas State Board**

of **Plumbing Examiners**, 800/845-6584 about the violation.

**5. HAVE AN ELECTRICIAN CHECK YOUR WIRING.**

Check with a licensed electrician or your local electrical code to determine if your wiring can be grounded elsewhere. DO NOT attempt to change the wiring yourself because improper grounding can cause electrical shock and fire hazards. If grounding wires from the electrical system are attached to your pipes, corrosion may be greater.

**IF LEAD LEVEL PERSISTS**

The steps described above will reduce the lead concentrations in your drinking water. However, if a water test indicates that the drinking water coming from your tap contains lead concentrations in excess of 15 ppb after flushing, or after we have completed our actions to minimize lead levels, then you may want to take the following additional measures:

**6. PURCHASE OR LEASE A HOME TREATMENT DEVICE.**

Home treatment devices are limited in that each unit treats only the water that flows from the faucet to which it is connected, and all of the devices require periodic maintenance and replacement. Devices such as reverse osmosis systems or distillers can effectively remove lead from your drinking water. Some activated carbon filters may reduce lead levels at the tap. However, all lead reduction claims should be investigated. Be sure to check the actual performance of a specific treatment device before and after installing the unit.

**7. PURCHASE BULK BOTTLED WATER FOR DRINKING AND COOKING.**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

You can consult a variety of sources for additional information. Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects of lead.

State and local government agencies that can be contacted include:

**[insert the name or title of facility official if appropriate]** at **[insert phone number]** can provide you with information about your facility's water supply; and

**Texas Commission on Environmental Quality**, Public Drinking Water Section at 512/239-4691 or the

**Texas Department of State Health Services**, Lead Poisoning Group 800/588-1248 can provide you with information about the health effects of lead.



# Lead in Drinking Water

