

Lead in drinking water

The best way to determine if you or a member of your family has been exposed to lead is to ask your doctor for a blood test for lead. But a blood test for lead does not tell you the source of the lead, such as lead in the paint or water of a home. Your home might have plumbing with lead or lead solder. You cannot see, smell, or taste lead in drinking water, and boiling your water will not get rid of lead.

To test a home's water, contact a laboratory accredited to test lead in drinking water by the California Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP). A list of such laboratories may be found at the following website:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/labs/documents/elap_certified_all_labs.pdf

The laboratory can advise you on how to collect a water sample. Lead in drinking water is likely to be highest after water has been sitting unused in plumbing for at least 6 hours.

If drinking water has detectable amounts of lead following laboratory analysis, follow the recommendations listed below to help reduce your exposure:

- ◆ Let the water run for at least 30 seconds before using it for drinking or cooking.
- ◆ Let the water run for a longer period of time (1 to 5 minutes, until the water feels cold) if the household water has not been used for 6 hours or longer.
- ◆ Conserve water by using the water that initially comes from the tap for watering plants or for outdoor landscaping.
- ◆ Always use water from the cold tap. If water needs to be heated, draw water from the cold water tap and heat it on the stove, in an electric tea kettle or in the microwave.
- ◆ Never use lead solder when performing plumbing work. If you hire a plumber, get a statement in writing that the work will be done using materials that comply with California Health and Safety Code Section 116875.
- ◆ Remove the faucet strainers from household taps and remove any loose solder or debris that may be in the strainer. Let the water run for 3 to 5 minutes with the faucet strainer removed to flush out any additional solid debris. The strainer may then be replaced and periodically monitored for debris as needed. (Applies to homes built in the last 5 years or with recent plumbing work.)
- ◆ Install a corrosion control system if your family's water source is a well or other water collection system.
- ◆ Consider replacing older brass faucets installed prior to 2010 (but especially prior to 1986) with new ones that meet the January 1, 2010 requirements. Items that carry the NSF 61, Annex G designation meet this standard.

The following website from the CDC has more tips about lead in drinking water:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm>

For more information about lead poisoning, sources of lead, and getting tested, call your local lead poisoning prevention program. In Contra Costa County, contact:

Contra Costa Lead Poisoning Prevention Project

www.cchealth.org/lead-poison ❖ 925-313-6763 ❖ 925-313-6822 (en Español)