

## LEAD AND PLUMBING

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Natural occurrence of lead in ground water is very rare but there is clear medical evidence that lead is harmful, especially for children. Most household danger from lead results from breathing in dust particles from old lead based paint. The principal health concern related to drinking water arises when water comes in contact with old lead pipes or with plumbing that has lead-based solder to join pipes. Lead in drinking water is not good news. However it is easy to test for lead, and not difficult to solve problems from lead in drinking water.

The risk problem occurs when water is acidic, (pH below 7) and can dissolve small quantities of lead. Homeowners should check the pH of their well water, especially houses built before 1987 (when lead solder was banned), it makes good sense to test for lead. The lead test is not complex or expensive. Many hardware stores sell do-it-yourself lead testing kits although a certified water-testing laboratory will provide a more accurate lead test. Always use the sample bottle provided by the laboratory and follow water sampling directions. Lead tests should be taken in the kitchen first thing in the morning. You want to sample the water that has been in contact with the pipes overnight. DON'T run the tap before taking a water sample for a lead test. If the water sample test result shows a level of lead above the EPA action limit of 15 parts per billion you should seek advice.

Controlling the pH of your water is usually less expensive than replacing your plumbing system. Keeping your water at or around a pH of 7 can be achieved by using water conditioning equipment that increases the alkalinity of water by passing it through granular lime or calcium carbonate particles. Carbon filters can remove lead from water. Before resorting to an expensive treatment solution do a repeat water test for lead and pH.

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