Lead in Drinking Water

Lead can be found throughout a person's environment, including their homes. Homes built before 1978 can contain lead-based paint and dust, which is a well-established cause of child exposure to lead.

People can also be exposed to lead in their household drinking water due to corrosion of older water service lines and pipes, faucets and fittings inside the home. This can occur in homes served by a private residential well or a city/community residential water supply. Children are at the highest risk health effects, but everyone may be exposed to lead in their drinking water. If you are pregnant, lead can harm your baby.

As a leader in the nation in lead exposure prevention, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) recommends that Michigan households take the necessary steps to Get Ahead of Lead to stay safe and protect against the threat of lead in drinking water. Learn more about the statewide "Get Ahead of Lead" strategy by visiting Michigan.gov/GetAheadofLead.

MDHHS recommends that all Michigan households use a certified lead-reducing drinking water filter if their home has or if they are uncertain if it has one of the following:

- Lead or galvanized plumbing.
- A lead service line carrying water from the street to their residence.
- Old faucets and fittings that were sold before 2014.

Use a filter until you are able to remove sources of household lead plumbing, such as by:

- Replacing pre-2014 faucets.
- Getting a lead inspection and replace needed plumbing.

How lead gets into drinking water

The most common source of lead in drinking water is plumbing made with lead—like pipes, fittings, fixtures and faucets. Lead can get into your drinking water when plumbing containing lead begins to break down or dissolve.

Lead service lines or galvanized plumbing. Some older homes on a city/community residential water supply may have lead service lines or galvanized plumbing that may cause lead contamination in drinking water when corrosion happens.

Parts of a well system. Homes that get water from a shared or private residential well may have lead in parts of the well system, like a packer or brass components of a submersible pump and may corrode and add lead to water.

How lead gets into drinking water, continued

Older plumbing. Older faucets, fittings and valves made before 2014 may contain up to 8% lead even if marked “lead-free” and may corrode and add lead to water.

Older homes. Houses built before 1988 may be more likely to have plumbing which used lead, such as leaded or galvanized pipes, or copper with lead solder.

Problems with lead in drinking water

Lead can be harmful to everyone’s health. Children and babies are most at risk, as their brains and nervous systems are still developing. Too much lead is linked to some possible health effects such as:

Children		Adults	
Lower levels of lead	**Higher levels of lead**	**Lower levels of lead**	**Higher levels of lead**
• Lower IQ scores. • Decreased academic achievement. • Decreased hearing. • Increased problems with behavior and attention related disorders. • Decreased kidney function.	• Anemia. • Muscle weakness or soreness. • Severe stomachache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and/or constipation. • Severe damage to the brain, nervous system, and kidneys.	• Increased blood pressure. • Decreased kidney function. • Decreased cognitive function. • Slower reaction times. • Altered mood and behavior.	• Anemia. • Muscle weakness or soreness. • Delayed conception. • Poor sperm and semen quality. • Increased risk of heart disease. • Severe stomachache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and/or constipation.

If you are concerned about lead in your drinking water, go to Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe to learn more about the following ways you can reduce your exposure.

Visit Eh.Michigan.gov/DW-Testing to learn how to test your drinking water.

Visit Michigan.gov/GetAheadofLead to learn how to keep your water moving.

Visit Eh.Michigan.gov/EPAFilterGuide2024 to learn about drinking water filters.

Visit Eh.Michigan.gov/CleaningYourAerators to learn how to clean your faucet aerators.

For more information

MDHHS Care for Mi Drinking Water Website
800-648-6942
Michigan.gov/CareforMiDrinkingWater

Mi Lead Safe Website
Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe

Get Ahead of Lead Website
Michigan.gov/GetAheadofLead

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
Michigan.gov/DrinkingWater
Michigan.gov/WaterWellConstruction

Laboratory Services
Michigan.gov/EGLElab

List of Michigan Local Health Departments
Eh.Michigan.gov/MiHealthDepartment

MDHHS
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

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