



# Testing Your Water for Lead

## Sources of lead in drinking water

Lead enters drinking water through corroding plumbing materials including aging lead service pipes, galvanized pipes, copper pipes with lead solder, and chrome-plated brass faucets, valves or fittings. Lead sources and lead levels vary between buildings, so it is important to identify and remove any lead sources.

## Testing your water for lead

Since you cannot see, taste or smell lead in drinking water, having your water tested is the only sure way to tell if there are harmful quantities of lead in your drinking water. To find out about testing, contact MLGW Water Laboratory at 901-320-3962, or email [waterlab@mlgw.org](mailto:waterlab@mlgw.org), or view the steps on [mlgw.com](http://mlgw.com).

## Directions on taking your water sample

MLGW will provide a lead test kit that contains a sample container and instructions on collecting a sample of your drinking water to test for lead. MLGW will deliver and pick up the lead test kit at your address.

### *What to do while you wait for your water test results:*

- *Every morning run cold water for one minute before using the tap. This will clear any water that has been sitting in the pipes overnight. It is also recommended that you flush your tap if you have been away from home for extended hours such as vacation or weekends.*



- *When drinking or cooking, use only cold water.*
- *Before drinking, you can flush your home's pipes by running the tap, taking a shower, doing laundry, or doing a load of dishes.*
- *Boiling water will not reduce lead. Testing your drinking water is the only way to confirm if lead is present.*
- *Find your local Consumer Confidence Report at [mlgw.com](http://mlgw.com).*

**For more information about lead in drinking water, please contact EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791 or visit [epa.gov](http://epa.gov).**





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## What does my water test results actually mean?

### Non-Detect (ND) or less than 1 ppb (ug/L)

- No action needed

### 1 to 15 ppb (ug/L)

- Before using water from the tap, flush the lines by running cold water for one minute. This clears out any water that has been sitting in the pipes overnight. Also, when you have been away from home for extended hours, you need to flush the tap.

- Use only cold water for drinking and cooking. If you need hot water for drinking and cooking, run cold water from the tap first, then heat it using the stove or microwave.

- Use bottled water for baby formula and food. If you must use tap water, make sure to use cold water and flush the tap for a full minute first.

- Look for alternative sources of treatment of water such as installing a certified water filter to remove lead. There are pitcher and faucet filters that remove lead. Look for those that are certified to remove lead by the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) International.

- If you choose to look for alternative sources or treatment of water, you may want to consider purchasing a water filter, bottled water or a filter system. Not all filters can remove lead. Read the packaging to ensure the filter is approved to reduce lead. Look for the NSF mark, or see additional information at [nsf.org](http://nsf.org) on performance standards for water filters.

You can flush your water to reduce potential exposure to lead from household lead plumbing. This is especially important when the water has been off and sitting in the pipes for more than 6 hours. Before drinking, flush your home's pipes by running the tap, taking a shower, doing laundry or doing a load of dishes.

### Can I shower in lead-contaminated water?

Yes. Bathing and showering should be safe for you and your children, even if the water contains lead over EPA's action level. Human skin does not absorb lead in water.

### Greater than 15 ppb (ug/L)

Take steps listed above, AND

- If a second water test shows there is still lead in your water above 5 ppb, try to identify the source of lead in your home such as pipes or plumbing fixtures. Replace any lead plumbing parts. Drink bottled water until the lead is removed.

\*ppb – parts per billion



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