



OKLAHOMA
State Department
of Health

Lead in Your Drinking Water



If you live in a home built before 1986, or you have received a letter from your local water provider indicating high levels of lead have been found in your community water, you are encouraged to take the following safety measures:

- **Have your water tested.** Contact your local community water supply for more information. This needs to be done by an Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) certified laboratory and usually includes a fee. Testing typically costs between \$20 and \$100.
- **Flush your pipes** if water has not been used for 6-8 hours before using it for drinking or cooking. Water should run 15-30 seconds or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature.
- **Use cold water for cooking, drinking and making baby formula and cereal.** Lead dissolves better in hot water and will become concentrated in boiled water. **Never use hot water** from the tap to mix infant formula.
- **If the line is made of lead,** you will need to contact a licensed plumber, or the contractor who installed the line, to have it replaced.

If you received a letter indicating there are high levels of lead in your community water and you have not had your water tested:

- Pregnant women, infants and children under the age of 6 should use bottled water for drinking, cooking and making baby formula. These groups are at a higher risk of exposure. A fluoride supplement may be needed because most bottled water does not contain fluoride.

If you have had your water tested and the lead levels are confirmed by a certified laboratory to be above the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) action level of 15 ppb:

- Consider using bottled water or a water filter that is certified to remove lead by the NSF International.

Get tested. If you are pregnant or have children you should all have a Lead Test. Contact your local health department or healthcare provider to find out how.

HIGH RISK

- Pregnant women
- Infants
- Children under the age of 6

How does lead get into my drinking water?

Lead rarely occurs naturally in lakes and rivers. Instead, it mostly enters drinking water through the water distribution system and household plumbing. Lead leaches into water from household pipes, faucets, fittings and solder. Older homes are most at risk of having lead in water because lead pipes were commonly used until the 1940s and lead solder was used until 1986. Other sources of lead in the home are brass and chrome plated faucets. The more time water has been sitting in the pipes, the more lead it may contain.

Learn more about your drinking water by contacting your local water provider for the latest copy of the annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR).

Health Effects of Lead

Lead exposure can affect anyone, but infants, young children and unborn babies are most at risk. Physical and behavioral effects of lead occur at lower exposure levels for children than adults. A dose of lead that would have little effect on an adult can have a significant effect on a small child. Exposure to even low levels of lead have been linked to:

- Damage to the central and peripheral nervous system
- Slowed growth and development (shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired formation and function of blood cells)
- Learning disabilities and behavioral problems

The EPA estimates that drinking water can make up to 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead. Infants who consume mostly mixed formula can receive 40 to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water.

Talk to your health care provider if you are concerned about lead exposure.



Contact Information:

For more information about lead in your water, call the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline **1 (800) 426-4791**.

To find an Oklahoma DEQ certified laboratory for testing, contact the State Laboratory Services Lab Certification program at **1 (866) 412-3057** or online [DEQ.ok.gov/division/sels/](https://deq.ok.gov/division/sels/)

For more information on childhood lead poisoning contact the Oklahoma Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program oklppp@health.ok.gov **(405) 426-8311** or toll free at **1 (800) 766-2223**.