



# LEAD

## What are the effects of lead in drinking water?

The health effects of lead are linked to how much and how often you take lead into your body: a small amount can affect you after a long time; or, a large amount can affect you after a short time.

Young children and the unborn are most affected by lead intake. High lead intake at an early age can harm a child's learning ability and behaviour, as well as cause hearing and growth problems.

The effects of lead intake over many years can include increased blood pressure, fewer blood cells, kidney problems, and poor sperm production for men.

## What is lead?

Lead has the symbol "Pb" and is a natural metal found in soil, and rock. Lead has been used to make many products, and some of this lead can get into the air, the water, and even our bodies.

Small amounts of lead can get into drinking water from lead pipes, brass fittings and faucets, or lead solder. This is a greater problem in homes built before 1970 where lead pipes have been used. The amount of lead in the water goes up the longer the water sits in these pipes. Lead can also be found naturally in groundwater in some areas.

## What is the guideline for lead?

The maximum acceptable concentration of lead in drinking water is 0.005 milligrams per litre (mg/L).

If you think that you or your child has health problems from high lead intake, see a health care provider. You or your child may need a blood test to find out how much lead is in your body.

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 <https://www.gov.nl.ca/eccc/waterres/quality/drinkingwater/>





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## Removing lead from drinking water

Replacing older pipes and plumbing fixtures is the most important step to help remove the source of lead from the home/system. However, lead can also occur naturally in groundwater. In this case, water treatment is required.

Some home water treatment units can remove lead from your drinking water, but they may be costly. If you decide to buy one, be sure that it is designed to remove lead and follow the instructions for changing the filters. See [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org) for more information about home drinking water treatment units.

## Reducing your exposure

To reduce or eliminate your intake of lead from drinking water you should:

- Use an alternate source of drinking water
- Run your tap for 2 or 3 minutes in the mornings, or after being away from home for over a day and for at least 30 seconds before each use.
- When preparing baby formula use commercially produced bottled water or sources known to be safe. Bottle re-filling stations may not meet acceptable water quality guidelines.

## Other sources of lead

- be aware of children's toys or furniture, as they may contain lead paint
- wash objects that may be put in a child's mouth
- make sure that your children wash their hands before they eat
- keep vegetable gardens and children's play areas away from busy roads and old buildings where more lead may be present
- avoid using or removing old paints made before 1976
- wet mop floors to avoid stirring up dust which may contain lead
- use lead-free solder when making repairs, or doing hobbies
- shower and change your clothes after working with objects containing lead, like recycled car batteries

## Where can I find out more?

To find out more, please visit Water Resources Management's website at [www.gov.nl.ca/eccc/water](http://www.gov.nl.ca/eccc/water).

You can also contact an Environmental Health Officer or Program Manager at the nearest Government Service Centre, NL Health Services, or a water resources official with WRMD.

