

## **Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies**

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## **Facts on Lead in Drinking Water**

### **What are the major sources of lead exposure for children?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that the major source of lead exposure for children in the United States is lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust found in deteriorating buildings.

### **Is there a national problem with lead in drinking water?**

So far there does not appear to be a national problem with lead in drinking water, however U.S. EPA is looking into this. U.S. EPA's Lead and Copper Rule seems to be working as intended. Where there is a compliance problem, U.S. EPA or a State may take action to correct the situation.

### **If there is lead in my drinking water, where does it come from?**

Lead in drinking water rarely comes from the water treatment plant or from water mains. Lead comes from faucets, plumbing fixtures and lead solder within the home and from lead service lines, if they are present. Lead is seldom found in natural sources of drinking water.

### **Why is there lead in my faucets and fixtures?**

In 1986, Congress amended the Safe Drinking Water Act to allow faucets and other plumbing fixtures to contain up to 8% lead. Congress defined such fixtures as "lead-free."

### **What happens if a water system exceeds the 15 ppb Action Level?**

According to U.S. EPA, the 15 ppb Action Level is used to indicate whether corrosion-control efforts are effective and to measure progress in reducing lead levels. All large water systems are required to maintain corrosion control. If a large water system detects lead above 15 ppb in the tap water in more than 10% of a sample set of homes, then the water system further informs the public about the health effects so that consumers can make decisions about the sources of lead in their homes.

### **What can consumers do?**

To reduce exposure from lead, consider using an in-home filter or follow the CDC's advice on running taps on COLD before drinking. Homeowners who install filters must use filters that are certified to remove lead. Also, read the filter's instructions on care and use. Homeowners should also install plumbing fixtures containing no lead. Information on plumbing fixtures and in-home filters is provided by the National Sanitation Foundation at 1-800-NSF-MARK or [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org). Never boil water to remove lead, because this concentrates the lead as water evaporates.

### **What can Congress do?**

Congress currently defines "lead-free" as 8% lead content. Instead, Congress should make illegal the manufacture of faucets and fixtures contributing to lead exposure. This would reduce the amount of lead in drinking water.

### **More Information and Tips**

The Centers for Disease Control has a very informative question and answer page about lead and drinking water: [www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/spotLights/leadinwater.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/spotLights/leadinwater.htm). The U.S. EPA operates a National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-Lead. There is also a useful website at [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead).