

Sources of Lead in Drinking Water

Drinking water is one possible source of lead exposure. Lead enters the water through contact with the plumbing from corrosion of pipes, solder, fittings, fixtures and faucets:

- **Service Line** - Pipe that connects the water main in the street to the structure's internal plumbing. The material of water service pipes can vary, and some structures still have lead service pipes, that can be a major source of lead contamination in water;
- **Goose Necks and Pigtails** - Pipes that connect the service line to the main may contain lead;
- **Solder** - Connects pipes in structure's internal plumbing. Lead solder was used in plumbing prior to 1987. Solder made or installed before 1986 contained high lead levels;
- **Brass Faucets, Valves or Fittings** - Until 2014, brass faucets and fittings sold in the United States that were labeled "lead-free" can contain up to eight percent lead;
- **Galvanized Iron Pipes** - Old, corroded pipes that can release lead in water if the structure has, or once had, a lead service pipe. Galvanized pipes were installed in many homes prior to the 1960s. Lead particles can attach to the surface of galvanized pipes. Over time, the particles can enter your drinking water, causing elevated lead levels.

In the District, like in most older cities, homes built before 1978 were typically built with a lead service line. The District Government recognizes this and in response Mayor Bowser signed legislation for two new lead water service line replacement programs that assist homes affected by this environmental hazard. For information regarding these programs visit:

<https://doee.dc.gov/service/leadlinereplacement>.

Tips to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water

Eliminating sources of lead, before exposure can occur, is considered the best strategy to protect children from potential adverse health outcomes.

In addition to installing water filters, and replacing them regularly, following and sharing the tips below is a good practice to reduce the risk of exposure to lead in drinking water:

- Do not cook or mix infant formula using hot water from the tap.
- Regularly clean the faucet aerators on all drinking water sources.
- Run the water briefly prior to consuming to flush the lines.
- Do not consume water that has been sitting in the plumbing system for more than six hours. To avoid this, run the tap for at least one minute in the morning or any other time water has not been used in the facility for more than six hours prior to consuming.