

# reduce lead exposure

The City of Gresham wants to reduce exposure to lead in drinking water.

Lead exposure is a world-wide health problem. Household dust, soil, paint, pigments, solder, ammunition, plumbing, cable coverings, caulk, bearings, pottery, and folk medicine remedies or cosmetics may contain lead. People are exposed to lead in many ways.

Exposure to lead through drinking water is possible if materials in a building's plumbing contain lead. The level of lead in water can increase when water "stands" in contact with lead-based solder and brass faucets containing lead.

Gresham's water sources contain no detectable lead. Our water supplies consistently meet or surpass all federal and state drinking water standards. The City of Gresham has no known lead service connections in its distribution system.

**Water systems regularly monitor for lead at the tap.** The Oregon Dept. of Human Services requires water systems to monitor regularly for lead in targeted homes with high risk factors for lead. Some households in our community have lead levels in standing water that exceed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "action level," usually because of plumbing installed in buildings years ago. We want all our customers to have the important public health information in this brochure.

For more information:

*The City of Gresham*  
(503) 618-2626, [www.ci.gresham.or.us](http://www.ci.gresham.or.us)

*US EPA, Safe Drinking Water Hotline*  
(800) 426-4791, [www.epa.gov/safewater](http://www.epa.gov/safewater)

*National Lead Information Line*, (800) 440-LEAD

*LeadLine*, a Multnomah County Health Department phone line for resources about lead hazards and lead poisoning prevention, (503) 988-4000

*NSF International*, for information on "lead-free" faucets, (800) 673-6275, [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org)

Programs work to reduce community exposure to lead.

#### **Water Treatment and Water Quality Monitoring**

The Oregon Dept. of Human Services has set water treatment targets for the Portland Water Bureau. These targets reduce corrosion in plumbing through adjusting the pH of the water. Portland has measured a 60 percent reduction in lead at the tap with pH adjustment.

#### **Home Lead Hazard Reduction Program**

This program focuses on all sources of lead in the home environment, including lead dust in and around older homes once painted with lead-based paint. It includes lead-risk evaluations, blood-lead level testing for children, and educational materials about lead safety. It provides services to control or reduce lead hazards.

#### **Community Education and Outreach**

The Portland Water Bureau, in cooperation with the City of Gresham, and other water providers works with community, public health, environmental, business, and media organizations and agencies to develop educational activities and materials about lead hazards.

## Testing Your Water for Lead

*The following is a list of some State-approved laboratories\* in the Portland Metropolitan Area that you can call to have your water tested for lead. These labs charge a fee.*

<b>Alexin Analytical Laboratories</b>	<b>(503) 639-9311</b>
<b>Coffey Laboratories</b>	<b>(503) 254-1794</b>
<b>TestAmerica Portland</b>	<b>(503) 906-9200</b>

\* For more information on certified labs, contact the Oregon Department of Human Services, (503) 731-4317. [www.ohd.hr.state.or.us/dwp](http://www.ohd.hr.state.or.us/dwp)

If you have questions on any of this material, please contact the City of Gresham, Water Division (503) 618-2626.

aaaaPara obtener una copia de esta información en Español, llame al: (503) 988-4000 .

АЧтобы получить данную информацию на русском языке, цозвоните по телефону: (503) 988-

Để được bản thông tin này bằng tiếng Việt, xin gọi: (503) 988-4000 .



**City of Gresham**  
**Department of Environmental Services**

Water Quality Program  
1333 NW Eastman Parkway  
Gresham, Oregon 97030  
(503) 618-2626  
TTY (503) 661-3000



## Important Information

# LEAD

your  
drinking  
water



## Easy steps to avoid possible exposure to lead from plumbing:

- 1** Use only fresh water from the cold water tap for drinking, cooking or making baby formula.
- 2** Avoid using water that has been standing in the pipes. When a faucet is not used for more than six hours, run the cold water tap until the water feels noticeably colder (30 seconds – 2 minutes). This flushes standing water out of the pipes, replacing it with fresh water.
- 3** Use only lead-free solder when making plumbing repairs. It's the law.
- 4** Look for faucets which are NSF-certified to limit contaminants to acceptable drinking water levels.

## Important Information about lead.

- Lead is dangerous to everyone, but particularly to children age six and younger, and pregnant women
- Lead is not found in our drinking water sources, but it can get into drinking water from some household plumbing fixtures and lead solder
- Find out how to reduce your exposure to lead in water and how to have your water tested for lead – read the information contained in this brochure

### Please remember:

- Never drink water that has been standing in plumbing pipes for more than a few hours, and
- Never use water from the hot water faucet for drinking or cooking

*This information is provided under the Oregon Administrative Rules, Chapter 333, Division 61, Public Water Systems, Treatment Requirements and Performance Standards for Corrosion Control. OAR 333-061-0034(5).*

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the City of Gresham are concerned about lead in your drinking water. Although most homes have very low levels of lead in their drinking water, some homes in the community have lead levels above the EPA action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb), or 0.015 milligrams of lead per liter of water (mg/L). Under Federal law we were required to have a program in place to minimize lead in your drinking water by January 1, 1997. This program includes corrosion control treatment, source water treatment, and public education. If you have any questions about how we are carrying out the requirements of the lead regulation please give us a call at (503) 618-2626. This brochure explains the simple steps you can take to protect you and your family by reducing your exposure to lead in drinking water.

## Health Effects of Lead

Lead is a common metal found throughout the environment in lead-based paint, air, soil, household dust, food, certain types of pottery, porcelain and pewter, and water. Lead can pose a significant risk to your health if too much of it enters your body. Lead builds up in the body over many years and can cause damage to the brain, red blood cells and kidneys. The greatest risk is to young children and pregnant women. Amounts of lead that won't hurt adults can slow down normal mental and physical development of growing bodies. In addition, a child at play often comes into contact with sources of lead contamination – like dirt and dust – that rarely affect an adult. It is important to wash children's hands and toys often, and to try to make sure they only put food in their mouths.

## Lead in Drinking Water

■ Lead in drinking water, although rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning, can significantly increase a person's total lead exposure, particularly the exposure of infants who drink baby formulas and concentrated juices that are mixed with water. The EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead.

■ Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminants in that it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like rivers and lakes. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of the corrosion, or wearing away, of materials containing lead in household plumbing. These materials include lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, and brass and chrome plated brass faucets. In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing greater than 0.2% lead, and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes and other plumbing materials to 8.0%.

■ When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems containing lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon after returning from work or school, can contain fairly high levels of lead.

## Steps You Can Take in the Home To Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water

Despite the best efforts mentioned earlier to control water corrosivity and remove lead from the water supply, lead levels in some homes or buildings can be high. To find out whether you need to take action in your own home, have your drinking water tested to determine if it contains excessive concentrations of lead. Testing the water is essential because you cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. Some local laboratories that can provide this service are listed at the end of this booklet. For more information on having your water tested, please call (503) 618-2626.

If a water test indicates that the drinking water drawn from a tap in your home contains lead above 15 ppb, then you should take the following precautions:

■ Let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. The longer water resides in your home's plumbing the more lead it may contain. Flushing the tap means running the cold water faucet until the water gets noticeably colder, usually about 15-30 seconds. Although toilet flushing or showering flushes water through a portion of your home's plumbing system, you still need to flush the water in each faucet before using it for drinking or cooking. Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your family's health. It usually uses less than one or two gallons of water and costs less than 17¢ for water per month. To conserve water, fill a couple of bottles for drinking water after flushing the tap, and whenever possible use the first flush water to wash the dishes or water the plants. If you live in a high-rise building, letting the water flow before using it may not work to lessen your risk from lead. These plumbing systems have more, and sometimes larger pipes than smaller buildings. Ask your landlord for help in locating the source of the lead, and ask your landlord and Gresham Water Quality for advice on reducing the lead level.

■ Try not to cook with, or drink water from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve more lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold tap and heat it on the stove.

■ Remove loose lead solder and debris from the plumbing materials installed in newly constructed homes, or homes in which the plumbing has recently been replaced, by removing the faucet strainers from all taps and running the water from 3 to 5 minutes. Thereafter, periodically remove the strainers and flush out any debris that has accumulated over time.

■ If your copper pipes are joined with lead solder that has been installed illegally since it was banned June 30, 1985, notify the plumber who did the work and request that he or she replace the lead solder with lead-free solder. Lead solder looks dull gray, and when scratched with a key looks shiny. In addition, notify the Oregon Dept. of Human Services about the violation.

■ Have an electrician check your wiring. If grounding wires from the electrical system are attached to your pipes, corrosion may be increased. Check with a licensed electrician or your local electrical code to determine if your wiring can be grounded elsewhere. DO NOT attempt to change the wiring yourself because improper grounding can cause electrical shock and fire hazards.

The steps described above will reduce the lead concentrations in your drinking water. However, if a water test indicates that the drinking water coming from your tap contains lead concentrations in excess of 15 ppb after flushing, or after you have completed actions to minimize lead levels, then you may want to take the following additional measures:

■ Purchase or lease a home treatment device. Home treatment devices are limited in that each unit treats only the water that flows from the faucet to which it is connected, and all of the devices require periodic maintenance and replacement. Devices such as reverse osmosis systems or distillers can effectively remove lead from your drinking water. Some activated carbon filters may reduce lead levels at the tap, however all lead reduction claims should be investigated. Be sure to check the actual performance of a specific home treatment device before and after installing the unit, and to strictly maintain and replace the unit according to the manufacturer's directions.

■ Purchase bottled water for drinking and cooking.

■ You can consult a variety of sources for additional information. Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects of lead. State and local government agencies that can be contacted include:

• The City of Gresham Water Quality Program at (503) 618-2626 can provide you with information about your water supply, and a list of local labs that have been certified by EPA for testing water quality;

• The City of Gresham, Building Permit Center, at (503) 618-2832 can provide you with information about building permit records that should contain the names of plumbing contractors that plumbed your home; and

• The Oregon Dept. of Human Services (503) 731-4317 or the Multnomah County Health Division at (503) 988-4000 can provide you with information about the health effects of lead and how you can have your child's blood tested.