

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

Why am I receiving this brochure?

Sampling conducted in August 2016 by the City of Marlborough Department of Public Works Water Department (Marlborough) found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes and buildings above the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) lead action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb). Lead is a health concern. In accordance with the Massachusetts Drinking Water regulations enforced by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), public water systems that exceed the allowable lead levels in the drinking water are required to provide this notification to consumers.

Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Please read this information closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

Health Effects of Lead

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones, and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child may receive lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.

Sources of Lead

Lead is a common metal found in the environment. Common sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint, household dust, soil, and some plumbing materials including faucets, service lines, and solder. Lead can also be found in other household items such as pottery, makeup, toys, and even food. Lead paint was outlawed in 1978, but dust from homes that still have lead paint is the most common source of exposure to lead. Therefore, make sure to wash your children's hands and toys often as they can come into contact with dirt and dust containing lead. The use of lead solder in plumbing was banned in the U.S. in 1986, but it still might be present in older homes.

The water provided by Marlborough is lead-free when it leaves the reservoirs. Marlborough's water mains (distribution pipes) that carry the water to your property are not made of lead, and therefore do not add lead to water. However, lead can get into tap water through a lead service line (the pipe that connects your home to the main in the street) or household plumbing (e.g. lead solder, some brass fixtures). **There are approximately 1200 number of lead service lines still in existence in Marlborough.**

The corrosion or wearing away of these lead-based materials can add lead to tap water, particularly if water sits for a long time in the pipes before use. Therefore, water that has been sitting in household pipes for several hours, such as in the morning, or after returning from work or school, is more likely to contain lead. If high levels of lead are found in drinking water, water may contribute up to 20 percent of a person's exposure to lead. Infants who consume mostly formula mixed with lead-containing water can receive up to 60 percent of their exposure from water.

Steps You Can Take to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water

- Fresh water is better than stale: If your water has been sitting for several hours, run the water until it is consistently cold - usually about 15-30 seconds – before drinking or cooking with it. This flushes water which may contain lead from the pipes. Use cold, fresh water for cooking and preparing baby formula: Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water tap. Lead dissolves more easily into hot water. Do not use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula.
- **Do not boil water to remove lead. Boiling water will not reduce lead.**
- Test your home for lead: The only way to determine the level of lead in drinking water at your home is to have the water tested by a state certified laboratory. The cost to test is usually between \$10 and \$50. Consider having your paint tested also. A list of labs is available on-line at <http://public.dep.state.ma.us/Labcert/Labcert.aspx> or you can call MassDEP at 978-682-5237 or e-mail Labcert@state.ma.us.
- Test your child for lead: Contact your local health department or your local health care provider to find out how you can get your child tested. A blood lead level test is the only way to know if your child is being exposed to lead. For more information, contact DPH at 1-800-532-9571 or at: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/environmental-health/exposure-topics/lead/>
- Contact the Marlborough DPW (see below) to find out if the pipe that connects your home or building to the water main in the street is a lead service line and if it is, what the process is to replace it.
- Identify if your plumbing fixtures contain lead: New brass faucets or other plumbing fixtures, including those labeled “lead-free”, may contribute lead to drinking water. If you are concerned about lead in tap water, you should consider buying a low-lead or no-lead fixture. Contact NSF at 1-800-NSF-8010 or www.nsf.org to learn more about lead-free faucets.
- Consider using a filter: If your water contains lead, you may want to consider using a filter. Make sure the filter you are considering removes lead – not all filters do. Be sure to replace filters in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions to protect water quality. Contact the National Sanitation Foundation at 1-800-NSF-8010 or www.nsf.org for more information on water filters. Also, if you are considering using bottled water, note that it may cost up to 1,000 times more than tap water. Simply flushing your tap, as described above, is usually a cheaper, equally effective alternative.

What is being done to control lead in the drinking water?

Marlborough is concerned about lead in your drinking water. We have both an extensive testing program and have treated the water to make it less corrosive. Most homes have very low levels of lead in their drinking water although some homes may have lead levels above the EPA Action Level of 15 parts per billion (ppb).

To monitor lead levels, Marlborough tests tap water in homes that are most likely to have lead. These homes are usually older homes that records indicate have lead service lines or lead solder. The samples are taken after water has been sitting overnight. The EPA rule requires that 90% of these worst case samples must have lead levels below the Action Level of 15 ppb.

Marlborough's drinking water comes from two sources, which complicates the water chemistry as it relates to treatment to reduce lead solubility. One source is the Cedar Hill Pump Station where treated water is purchased from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) from the Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoir system and pumped into Marlborough's distribution system. The second source is the Millham Reservoir where the water is treated at the Millham Water Treatment Plant before being pumped into the distribution system. The water from both locations is treated to make it less corrosive, thereby reducing the leaching of lead into the drinking water. Specifically approved water treatment chemicals are added to both water sources to adjust the water's pH, buffering capacity, and develop a protective coating on the inside of the pipes to help control leaching of hazardous metals, such as lead and copper, into the drinking water. Marlborough continues to fine-tune the levels of the treatment chemicals since corrosion control treatment began. Protective coatings on the pipes are periodically subject to disruptions in the distribution system from hydraulic changes in flow due to water main breaks, fighting fires, system flushing, etc.

During the 2013 routine sampling round for lead in Marlborough, the lead results were also above the EPA Action Level of 15 ppb allowable limit in the drinking water. This failure to maintain the level of lead in tap water below the action level was announced in Marlborough's 2013 City Drinking Water Report (also known as the Consumer Confidence Report) that was mailed to all of Marlborough's customers in early 2014. However the educational language on the health effects of lead was not sent out to customers served by the Marlborough in 2013 as required. As noted above, the results of Marlborough's most recent sampling round conducted in August 2016 had lead levels above the allowable drinking water limits, which is why you are receiving this notification now.

Marlborough is in the process of determining the most effective course of action to further reduce lead from leaching from the lead service lines into the drinking water and options for replacing lead service lines. Marlborough is in the process of performing additional testing and employing national experts in corrosion control and lead and copper compliance to determine how to make the Marlborough drinking water safer water for consumption.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call us at (508) 624-6910 ext. # 33401 or visit our website at www.marlborough-ma.gov to find out more information about lead in your drinking water.

For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit any of the following websites:

EPA: <http://www2.epa.gov/lead>

MassDEP: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/drinking/is-there-lead-in-my-tapwater.html>

Department of Public Health:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/environmental-health/exposure-topics/lead/>
or call 1-800-532-9571

Your local health care provider can also be contacted for more information on the health effects of lead.

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www.marlborough-ma.gov