

FAQs about Lead in Water



Serving the communities of Bayside, Brown Deer, Fox Point, Glendale, River Hills, Shorewood and Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin

Testing for Lead in your Water

[How can I find the level of lead in my tap water at home?](#)

In Wisconsin, community members can either drop off or mail-in a sample of their water to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. Please visit the [Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene website](#). There is information on test kit ordering Info, test Information for homeowners, and a price list for all water tests, including lead.

[What is an unsafe amount of lead in tap water?](#)

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) passed the Safe Drinking Water Act to determine the level of contaminants in drinking water at which no adverse health effects are likely to occur with an adequate margin of safety. The EPA action level for lead is 15 parts per billion (ppb). For more information, please visit [Lead in Water from the Centers for Disease Control](#).

Lead in Drinking Water

[How can community members mitigate the risk of lead in their drinking water?](#)

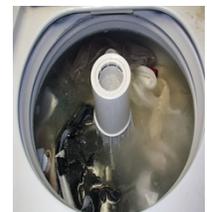
- Flush out water: If water hasn't been run for several hours (usually first thing in the morning), run the water for 2-3 minutes or until it becomes ice-cold. You can then use the water for drinking or cooking.
- Use cold water for drinking, cooking, and preparing baby formula: Using ice-cold water is safest for consumption because hot water is more likely to cause lead leaching, or lead contamination in water from the faucet
- Remove debris from faucet strainers periodically: Remove the faucet strainers/screens from the faucet you use for water consumption, rinse off the strainer, and run the water for 3-5 minutes. This process is recommended for twice a year.
- If lead levels are elevated, look for alternative sources (e.g. bottled water or water filters): If you purchase a water filter, make sure the filter is approved to reduce lead or contact NSF International at 800-NSF-8010 or www.nsf.org for information on performance standards for water filters
- For more information, please visit: [the WSSC Water website](#)

[Does boiling water remove lead?](#)

Boiling water does not remove lead. Boiling water can actually concentrate lead levels, so always use cold water for drinking and cooking, including for making baby formula or cereal. For more information, please [click here](#).

[Will running the tap increase my water bill?](#)

It usually uses less than one or two gallons of water and costs approximately \$1 a month to flush out your tap water. For more information, please [click here](#). You can also use the first run of water to wash dishes, put in a container to water house plants or a garden, wash your hands or face, use it for wiping down surfaces, or put it aside for other cleaning purposes. For more information, please [click here](#).



Using Lead-Safe Water in the Home

- [Bathing and Showering](#)
 - Bathing and showering should be safe for your family, even if the water contains lead over EPA's action level. Human skin does not absorb lead in water. For more information, please [click here](#).
- [Washing Food](#)
 - If lead levels in your water are between 0 and 15 ppb, and recent water use has occurred, run the water for at least 30 seconds before washing, preparing, or cooking food or drinking water. If lead levels are over 15 ppb, use water from a safe source (like bottled water).
- [Irrigating or Watering the Garden](#)
 - Watering your garden with any amount of lead in water is safe for plants. However, soil in your garden may contain lead contamination. Please visit the [UW Soil and Forage Lab website](#) to learn more about lead screening for soil.
- [Washing Dishes, Utensils, and Food Preparation Areas](#)
 - Water with any lead levels are safe to use to wash and sanitize dishes, tables, and eating utensils because very little water clings to smooth surfaces.
- [General Cleaning and Laundry](#)
 - Very little water remains on washed and laundered fabrics. Water with any lead levels can be safely used for general cleaning and washing for clothing, bedding, and linens.
- [Pets](#)
 - Animals should not drink water with greater than 15 ppb. If levels are between 0 and 15 ppb, water should run at least 30 seconds until it is cold if it has been run recently. If it has been sitting for 6 hours or more, run water for at least 2 minutes before serving to pets.
- For more information, please visit [this document from the Oregon Health Authority](#).

Testing your Children for Lead

[Who should get tested for lead?](#)

The Wisconsin Blood Lead Screening Recommendations suggest that children who answer, "yes," to one or more of the following questions should receive a blood lead test at 1 and again at 2 years of age:

- Does the child now live in or visit a house or building built before 1950 or have they ever in the past?
- Does the child now live in or visit a house or building built before 1978 with recent or ongoing renovations or have they ever in the past?
- Does the child have a brother, sister or playmate who has/had lead poisoning?
- Is the child enrolled in Medicaid or WIC?
- Does the child live in the cities of Milwaukee or Racine?

More Information on Lead

- [Find your local health department](#). They can assist you in identifying places to obtain a lead test and provide follow-up services to lead poisoned children
- Please visit the [Wisconsin Department of Health Services website](#) on Prevention and Intervention for Lead Exposure
- Browse this list of [website resources](#) from Lead-Safe Wisconsin

