

FAQs about Lead in Drinking Water

City of Poughkeepsie, NY

1. I heard there is lead in my drinking water? Is that true?

If you live in the City of Poughkeepsie, there could be lead in your drinking water above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) acceptable level of 15 parts per billion (ppb). Recent routine sampling has detected lead in some samples within the City.

You are less likely to have lead in your drinking water if your house was built after 1986. The only way to know for sure is to have your water tested.

If you live in the Town of Poughkeepsie, Arbors Condominiums, or the Village of Wappingers Falls, lead has not been detected in the water in these systems above the EPA acceptable level of 15 ppb.

2. How does lead get into my drinking water?

Lead in drinking water does not come from the Poughkeepsie Water Treatment Facility. Lead usually results from corrosion, or wearing away, of lead in service lines or household plumbing. Homes built before 1986 may contain lead solder in the pipes. The longer that water sits in the pipes unused, the greater the chance that lead from the plumbing may dissolve into the water.

3. How can I find out if there is lead in my water?

The only way to know if there is lead in your drinking water is to have it tested. Since you cannot see, taste, or smell lead dissolved in water, testing is the only sure way of telling whether there is lead in your drinking water.

Certified laboratories can test your water for lead. Two local, certified labs are:

Smith Laboratory
4 Scenic Drive
Hyde Park, NY 12538
845-229-6536

EnviroTest Laboratories, Inc.
315 Fullerton Avenue
Newburgh, NY 12550
Phone: 845-562-0890
Fax: 845-562-0841
www.envirotestlaboratories.com

Having your water tested will cost approximately \$25. Beware of unscrupulous businesses who may offer tests that are not effective for lead. Use only State-certified labs to test your water.

4. What can I do to avoid lead in my water?

- a) **Flush your pipes** – Run the tap until water is cold to the touch before using it for drinking or cooking. This is especially important after the water has been standing in the pipes overnight or for many hours (e.g. while people are at school or work). The flushed water can be saved and safely used for water house plants, washing dishes, showering, washing hands (skin does not absorb lead), or other general household use.

- b) **Use only cold water for drinking, cooking, and especially for making baby formula.** Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead. Use only cold water for drinking, cooking, and mixing baby formula.

These two actions will be most effective at reducing your family's exposure to lead in your drinking water. More information about what you can do to reduce your family's exposure to lead in drinking water can be found in the City of Poughkeepsie's brochure about lead in drinking water.

5. Can I filter my water to get the lead out?

There are many devices that are certified to reduce lead in drinking water. However, home treatment devices are limited because 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 after installing the unit by having a treated sample analyzed for lead. A sample of untreated water collected at the same time should also be analyzed to determine the quantity of lead that is removed through treatment.

6. How can I find out if I've been exposed to lead in my drinking water?

You can have your water tested to see if it contains lead. Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects of lead. If you are pregnant, talk to your physician about the need for blood lead testing.

7. Why is lead in drinking water a concern?

Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Although rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning, lead in drinking water 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. It is estimated that drinking water can make up to 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead.

8. Where can I get more information?

For more information about lead in the City of Poughkeepsie's water, call **Tina Udden at 845-729-3945**. More information about lead in drinking water can also be found on several web sites, including:

New York State Health Department

<http://www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/lead/leadwtr.htm>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

<http://epa.gov/SAFEWATER/lead/index.html>

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/faq/leadinwater.htm>