

## Let's Get the Lead Out

For many years, local utilities have been working to eliminate the threat of lead from customers' drinking water supplies. A metal used for most of the 20th century in everything from paint and gasoline to plumbing pipes and fixtures, lead has been linked to a number of serious health ailments. Because it can accumulate in the body, infants, children and developing fetuses are particularly susceptible to the effects of lead exposure.

The water leaving the treatment plant and traveling through water mains is almost always free of lead. However, lead is sometimes present in pipes connecting older homes to the water system or in fixtures and home plumbing. Water providers can adjust the water's chemistry at the treatment plant to minimize the possibility of lead dissolving into the water, but there are additional steps you can take at home.

- Have your water tested by a certified laboratory, particularly if your home was built before **1986**
- If your tap water does contain lead, contact your water provider.
- The surest way to protect against lead in water is to get the lead out altogether.
- Replace lead service lines -- If you have a lead service line, talk to a licensed plumber about getting it replaced.
- Replace other plumbing that contains lead -- We recommend you use an experienced, certified plumber to look for and replace lead fittings, fixtures or other potential sources of lead.

**In the meantime, if your tap water tests positive for lead, here are a few easy steps you can take right now:**

- **Use a Filter** – Several types of inexpensive household water filters are effective at removing lead. Before purchasing, look for a certification from NSF International that verifies the filter's ability to remove lead. It will usually be found on the packaging.
- **Run the Tap Before Use** – Lead levels are likely at their highest when water has been sitting in the pipe for several hours. Clear this water from your pipes by running the cold water for several minutes, which allows you to draw fresh water from the main. You can use this water on house plants or to flush toilets.
- **Use Cold Water for Cooking** – Always cook and prepare baby formula with cold water, because hot water dissolves lead more quickly, resulting in higher levels in water.
- **Clean aerators** – Aerators are small attachments at the tips of faucets which regulate the flow of water. They can accumulate small particles of lead in their screens. It's a good idea to remove your aerators at least monthly and clean them out.