

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER**

Rensselaer Water Department found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes or buildings. 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 receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect the child's brain development.

### **Sources of lead**

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 formula 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 the water distribution system and household plumbing. These materials include lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, brass and chrome plated brass faucets, and in some cases, pipes made of lead that connect houses and buildings to water mains (service lines). In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing greater than 0.2 percent lead and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes, and other plumbing material to 8.0 percent.

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 if the water has not been used all day, can contain fairly high levels of lead.

### **Steps You Can Take in the Home (or anywhere else) to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water**

Let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in the faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. The longer the water resides in the 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 homes 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 health. It usually uses less than one or two gallons of water. 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 dishes or water the plants.

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

not remove lead content and can concentrate it. In addition, do not mix baby formula with water from the hot water tap.

The steps described above will reduce the lead concentration in your drinking water. However, if you are still concerned, you may wish to purchase bottled water for drinking and cooking.

For more information, call us at (219) 866-5530 between the hours of 7:30am (CDT) to 4:00pm (CDT), or visit our website at [www.cityofrensselaer.in.com](http://www.cityofrensselaer.in.com) . For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home or building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/lead> or contact your health care provider who 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:

- Jerry Lockridge at (219) 866-5530 can provide you with information about your facilities water supply.
- Indiana State Department of Health at (317) 233-1250 or the Jasper County Health Department at (219) 866-4917 can provide you with information about the health effects of lead.

Customers can get their water test for lead by contacting a laboratory certified to test for lead in drinking water. A list of those laboratories is available online at [www.in.gov/isdh/22452.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/22452.htm).

The City of Rensselaer currently has our engineers working on the best solution to reduce lead levels in the few areas we have encountered elevated levels.