

Ripple Effect #15

Protect Your Health - Get the Lead Out!

Lead is a common metal that has been in many consumer products but is now known to be harmful to human health if ingested or inhaled. The Minnesota Department of Health has provided the following information about lead in drinking water and precautions you can take to help protect you and your family.

Drinking water is not our only source of lead exposure. However, combined with other sources, lead in water can increase the build-up of lead in our bodies. Lead that accumulates over time can result in damage to the brain, nervous system, red blood cells, and kidneys.

Lead is rarely found in natural sources of water such as rivers and lakes or underground aquifers but it may work its way into drinking water after the water has left the treatment plant and is on its way to people's faucets. This usually happens through the corrosion of materials containing lead in household plumbing. In most places, lead pipes are no longer installed for service lines or in household plumbing, and lead solder is no longer used. However, many older homes may still have significant amounts of lead in their plumbing systems.

You can reduce lead in your drinking water by taking the following precautions:

Flush taps before using water from them for drinking or cooking. Water that stands idle in pipes for long periods of time is more likely to absorb materials from the plumbing system. The best way to rid the pipes of water that may contain lead is to let the cold-water faucet run until you feel that the water is as cold as it will get; you should always run the water for at least 60 seconds.

Other household water uses will also help clear standing water from your home's plumbing. You may want to establish a routine of doing household tasks that use water-such as showering, flushing the toilet, or running the dishwasher-first thing in the morning before using water for drinking or cooking. You'll still need to flush individual faucets for a short time before using them for drinking water. The water you run from drinking water taps does not have to be wasted. You can use this water for cleaning purposes or for watering plants.

Use only cold water for cooking and drinking. Hot water dissolves lead more quickly than cold water, so don't use water from your hot-water faucet for cooking or drinking. If you need hot water for cooking or drinking, take water from the cold tap and heat it. It is especially important not to use the hot water for making baby formula.

Many laboratories can test your water to see if there is a lead problem. Fees will vary between labs. Check your Yellow Pages under "Laboratories-Testing."

For a complete list of tips, go to:

http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/water/com/fs/letitrun_english.html

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at www.redriverbasincommission.org.