

Note to water system: Add additional lines if more than 5 locations. Delete Header before printing.

How Lead Gets Into Water

Lead in drinking water most often comes from water distribution lines or household plumbing rather than from the water system source. Plumbing sources can include lead pipes, lead solder, faucets, valves, and other components made of brass. Lead from other sources (such as lead-based paint and contaminated dust or soil) can increase a person's overall exposure, which adds to the effects of lead in water.

Potential Health Effects of Lead

The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters the body. Lead is stored in the bones and can be released later in life. Lead can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, interfere with production of red blood cells that carry oxygen, and may result in lowered IQ in children. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development. Low levels of lead can affect adults with high blood pressure or kidney problems.

How Copper Gets Into Water

Copper is a mineral and natural component in soils. In the correct amounts, it is an essential nutrient for humans and plants. In Washington State, most copper in drinking water comes from corrosion of household plumbing. Plumbing sources can include copper pipe and brass fixtures. Copper from plumbing corrosion can accumulate overnight.

Potential Health Effects of Copper

Although copper is an essential mineral in the diet, too much copper can cause health problems. Copper is widely distributed within the tissues of the body, but accumulates primarily in the liver and kidneys. A single dose of 15 mg of copper can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and intestinal cramps. Severe cases of copper poisoning have led to anemia and to disruption of liver and kidney functions. Individuals with Wilson's or Menke's diseases are at higher risk from copper exposure.

How you can reduce exposure:

- If you suspect the water has been sitting in the pipes for several hours, flush the pipe by running the cold-water tap until the water is noticeably colder before using the water for drinking or cooking. **(The longer water has been sitting in the pipes, the more dissolved metals it may contain).**
- Use only cold water for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula. Hot water may contain higher levels of lead or copper.
- Frequently clean the filter screens and aerators in faucets to remove captured particles.
- If building or remodeling, only use "lead free" or low lead piping and materials. Avoid using copper piping or brass fixtures for locations where water will be consumed or used in food preparation (such as kitchen or bathroom sinks).