



Lead In Water:

How lead can get into water:

Lead can get into drinking water that has been in contact with for an extended period, such as overnight. The longer water is in contact with lead, the more lead is likely to be in it. If a lead pipe is damaged or flattened (which can happen when driveways and paths are replaced) the amount of lead that can get into the water increases. As well as lead supply pipes, lead can also enter water through lead solder joints, lead-lined tanks or plumbing fittings and taps.

Checking your water for lead:

If you live in an older property, you may still have some lead plumbing.

To identify lead pipes, look at the pipes leading to your kitchen tap or internal stop-tap (usually under the kitchen sink):

- unpainted lead pipes are dull grey and soft but show the shiny metal beneath when scraped gently.
- tapping a lead pipe with a metal object produces a dull 'thud' rather than a clear ringing.

Even if internal lead plumbing has already been replaced, it's important to check whether any underground water pipes in your garden or driveway are made of lead, as these are the property owner's responsibility. To do this, check the pipe coming from your outside stop tap to your property (you might want to ask for help to do this if access is difficult). Usually, as well as the above, external lead pipes:

- are about 25mm (1 inch) in diameter.
- have a rounded swollen joint where they connect to the stop-tap or meet other lead pipes.

If there's no lead pipework, you'll see pipes made from either:

- copper (hard, bright, or dull brown)
- iron (very hard, dark grey or rusty)
- polyethylene (coloured blue, black)
- PVC (grey) pipes.

Other household sources of lead in water can include:

- Lead solder joints in household copper pipework. Although this was banned in 1987, lead solder is still sometimes used illegally, so always use a trusted, licensed plumber.
- lead-lined storage tanks may still be in older properties. If the drinking water tap in the kitchen is supplied from a household storage tank, we advise updating it to connect directly to the mains and recommend replacing the lead-lined tank.



If you think you have lead pipes:

If you think you have lead pipes call us on 0330 303 0368. If our tests show that the level of lead in your drinking water is higher than the legal limit (the prescribed concentration value or PCV) we advise you to replace your lead pipes as soon as possible.

When replacing lead plumbing, the permanent solution is to replace all lead pipework with pipes made from safer materials. Remember:

- copper and lead pipes should never be used together.
- lead solder shouldn't be used on copper pipes for drinking water.
- if alternative, non-metallic pipework is used, electrical earthing should be checked by a qualified electrician.

What we'll do to help you?

- If analysis shows the concentration of lead is greater than the legal limit, we'll remove any sources of lead from our pipework and advise you on replacing the affected parts of your domestic plumbing system.
- If you choose to replace all the internal and external pipework at your property, we'll remove any of our lead pipework, up to the main, and replace it with pipes made from safer materials, free of charge.
- If your external supply pipe is made of lead and leaking, we'll replace up to 10 metres of it, free of charge.

If you've identified lead pipes we always advise replacing them as soon as possible.

If you do need to use lead pipes, don't drink the water that has been standing in the pipes overnight:

- first thing in the morning, run the tap for about one minute (instead of wasting water, fill a bowl to water plants)
- you'll need to run the tap for longer if your cold kitchen tap is more than 50 metres from the water mains
- as a guide, run your tap an extra 15 seconds for every extra 10 metres to the water main.

You should also run the water for a minute if the tap hasn't been turned on all day – for instance, if you've been out at work.

Always run the tap before making up bottle feeds for infants. Ensure that the cold kitchen tap is fed directly from the water main.

If you have lead pipes, only use the flushed cold kitchen tap for drinking and cooking – never use any hot tap.