

## Lead in Home Plumbing



### What You Need to Know



Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority  
(305) 296-2454  
[www.fkaa.com](http://www.fkaa.com)

## Sources of Lead

Lead is found in the natural and manmade environment. The greatest risk of exposure, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, is swallowing or breathing old lead paint chips or dust.

Lead is not present in the water supply that comes from any of the Authority's water treatment Plants.

Lead exposure may occur in some drinking water systems, under certain conditions, when corrosive water wears away materials in the water distribution system or household plumbing.

### Plumbing Sources

**Lead Service Pipe** (installed in homes until the mid 1950's)

**Lead Solder** (banned in 1987)

**Brass faucets, valves or fittings** (required to be "lead free" in 2014)

**Galvanized Pipes** (lead may accumulate in these pipes if used in conjunction with lead service pipe)

## Reducing Your Risk to Lead Exposure

If you're concerned about the potential of lead in your drinking water, you can take several steps to test for and limit possible exposure.

- **Testing at the tap** is the only way to measure the lead levels in your home or workplace. You can't see, smell or taste lead in your water. If you choose to have your tap water tested, be sure to use a properly certified laboratory. Testing usually costs between \$35 and \$100. To find a state certified laboratory you may contact the Authority at (305) 296-2454 or, contact a state certification officer at 850-245-8077 (<https://fldeplc.dep.state.fl.us/aams/index.asp>).
- **Flush your tap water.** Flushing the tap is particularly important when the faucet has gone unused for more than a few hours. It takes time for lead to dissolve into water, so the first water drawn from the tap in the morning or after a long period of non-use can contain higher levels of lead. Flushing clears standing water from your plumbing and home service line to ensure you are getting drinking water from the main, where lead is not present at harmful concentrations. Let the water run from the tap for up to 2 minutes before using it for cooking or drinking.  
  
Remember, you must flush EACH drinking water faucet after long periods of non-use for this strategy to be effective.
- **Use only cold water** from the tap for cooking or drinking. Lead leaches more easily into hot water than cold water.
- **Boiling water DOES NOT remove lead** and may actually concentrate the lead.
- **Remove faucet strainers** and rinse them to remove any debris. This can be done periodically to remove accumulated debris as well.
- Make sure **lead-free materials** are used when building any new home.

## Identifying Lead Service Lines

To determine if your home has a lead service line you (or your plumber) need to inspect the service line.



Lead pipe scratched with a key  
(photo courtesy of US EPA Region 5)

Lead service lines are generally a dull gray color and are considered somewhat soft. You can identify them easily by carefully scratching with a key. If the pipe is made of lead, the area you've scratched will turn a bright silver color. *Do not use a knife* or other sharp instrument and take care not to puncture a hole in the pipe.

Lead service lines often have a bulb-shaped connection



Photo—US EPA Region 5

**Becoming informed about lead and the actions you can take to minimize exposure are the first steps in reducing your risk.**

## The FCAA's Action in Preventing Lead Exposure

To minimize any risk of lead exposure in the water supply, the Authority adheres to a strict water chemistry program. Through a corrosion control study, vetted by the Florida Department of Health, optimal water quality parameters were identified to minimize corrosion in the water system.

Water treatment parameters, including pH and alkalinity are set to maintain optimal water chemistry. Continuous monitoring is performed to ensure these parameters are maintained. Additionally, the Authority's piping system is made of materials that meet all regulatory standards for delivering safe drinking water.

To monitor the effectiveness of the program, and follow regulatory requirements, the Authority conducts a stringent Lead and Copper Tap Sampling Program. This program analyzes the lead and copper content at the customer's faucet to detect potential issues in the customer's plumbing system.

Sites selected for sampling are considered high risk and include older residences that contain either copper pipes with lead solder, or lead pipes;

Customers are asked to take the "first draw" sample from either their kitchen or bathroom sink after the water has remained in the pipes for at least six hours to allow for maximum contact to obtain the most conservative test sample.

The Authority has remained in compliance with the Lead and Copper Tap Sampling Program since its inception over 22 years ago.



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