



WATERWORDS

Water purification and distribution are the responsibility of the City of Ottawa. The City provides its residents with high quality drinking water delivered in a cost effective manner. Ottawa's water system is one of the largest in Ontario managed by a single authority, serving approximately 750,000 water customers.

What is the safe limit for lead in drinking water?

Health Canada has established a maximum acceptable concentration for lead in drinking water of 10 ppb (parts per billion) in a free flowing sample of water. This drinking water guideline has been developed to protect the population most at risk, namely infants and young children.

Note: One ppb is comparable to one second in 32 years, or 1¢ in \$10,000,000.

Why is the safe limit for lead based on a free flowing sample of water?

Free flowing water samples better reflect the overall quality of household drinking water, and are indicative of normal lead exposure from drinking water.

What are lead levels in Ottawa's drinking water supply?

The lead concentration in Ottawa's water supply is very low. In fact, it is usually non-detectable (below 0.5 parts per billion) and therefore well within safe drinking water levels.

Should I be concerned about exposure to lead?

Infants, children and unborn children are most at risk to health effects from exposure to lead. Lead is present in many sources including food, dust, soil, some paint products and drinking water. Drinking water's contribution to total lead exposure is very low.

How could lead get into my drinking water?

Drinking water supplied by the City is essentially lead-free. Lead enters the drinking water from either lead service lines or from solder containing lead. Older homes, particularly those constructed before 1955, often contain lead water service lines. Homes constructed prior to the mid to late 1980's may have their plumbing connected with lead base solder. For lengthy periods (over six hours), lead can dissolve into drinking water that is left standing in household piping made with these materials.

How do I know if I have lead water service lines?

Most homes constructed prior to 1955 have lead water service lines. Both lead and copper piping were used up until 1958 when copper water service lines became the standard in the plumbing industry. Lead-based solder was used for plumbing until the mid to late 1980's when changes to the Plumbing Code prohibited its use.

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

I live in an older home. Is my drinking water safe?

Over the years, the City has conducted extensive testing of free flowing water samples taken from Ottawa homes with lead service lines. Tests consistently indicate that samples are within the safe drinking water standard. Residents in older homes who are concerned about lead levels can contact the City to have their tap water tested. Call the City's Water Quality Lab at 580-2424, ext. 22136 to arrange for an appointment.

How can I minimize exposure to lead in my older home?

While Ottawa's drinking water meets or is better than Health Canada's standard, residents in older homes can reduce the amount of lead they drink even further by following a few simple practices:

- Always use cold, fresh water for drinking, cooking, making baby formula and preparing beverages.
- Do not drink water that has been standing in your household water pipes for more than six hours. To rid your plumbing system of standing water, let the water run for approximately one minute or until it feels cold to the touch. You can also use the flushed water for other purposes such as plant watering or household cleaning.
- Flushing the toilet and washing your hands, or taking a shower is more than sufficient to flush standing water from your pipes each morning.

What else can I do to reduce my exposure to lead?

- Do not use ceramic cookware from foreign countries to heat water or store food unless you're sure that they are lead-free.
- Do not store beverages in lead crystal containers.
- If you work around lead, shower and change clothing and shoes at work, and wash work clothes separately.
- Be aware that some hobby activities like furniture refinishing, model building and working with metals or stained glass can be sources of lead.
- Exterior paints should not be used indoors since they may contain lead.

Can in-home water treatment systems reduce lead levels?

Some in-home water treatment equipment such as lead removing filters, reverse osmosis systems, and distillation units do remove lead dissolved in water. These systems can be very costly and require regular maintenance to function properly. If not properly maintained, they can promote the growth of bacteria and cause other water quality problems. Please consult the City's fact sheet: "*In-Home Water Treatment Systems*" for more information.

Can bottled water contain lead?

Yes. Bottled water is not necessarily lead-free. Check the label to see if it says whether the water is lead-free. Also, bottled water may cost as much as 100 times more than your tap water.

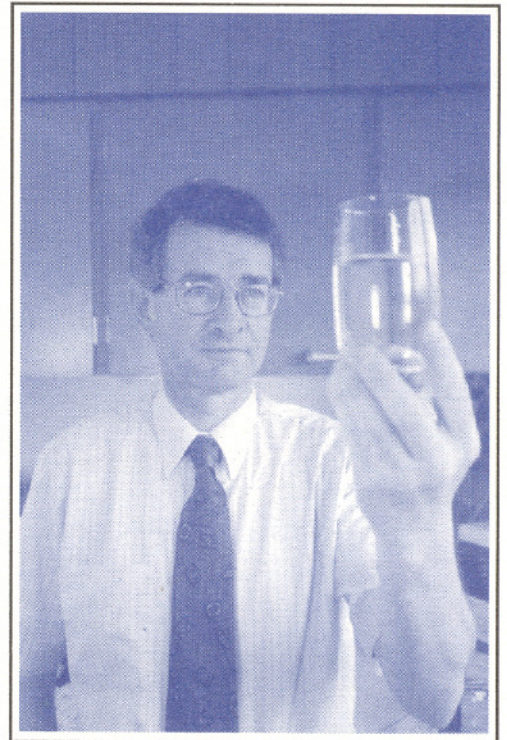
What is the City doing to reduce the risk of exposure to lead?

Ottawa's water purification process includes pH adjustment that reduces corrosion of water pipes and minimizes the amount of lead that can dissolve into drinking water. The City's annual Watermain Replacement Program replaces portions of the municipal water service lines. The City provides homeowners of older homes that are having the watermain on their street replaced with information concerning lead and drinking water. They then decide whether or not to replace their portion of their service line at the same time.

Extensive testing of Ottawa drinking water is also carried out to ensure that water delivered to residents' taps is well within drinking water quality guidelines and standards.

Who do I call if I have questions or concerns about water quality?

Call the City's Water Quality Lab at 580-2424, ext. 22136. Our water quality staff will be pleased to respond to your questions or concerns. Detailed information about water quality, including the City's Drinking Water Quality quarterly and annual reports are also available on our web site at ottawa.ca/water. You can also visit Health Canada's web site at www.hc.sc.gc.ca for more information on lead and human health.



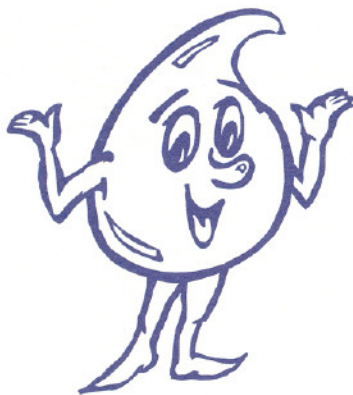
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Where can I get more information about drinking water in Ottawa ?

You can call:

24-hour Call Centre, City of Ottawa	580-2400
Drinking Water Quality Lab, Britannia Water Purification Plant, City of Ottawa ottawa.ca/water	580-2424 x 22136
Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards, Ontario Ministry of Environment www.ene.gov.on.ca/water	1-800-565-4923
Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water, Health Canada www.hc-sc.gc.ca	952-2594
Ministry of Environment (local office) www.ene.gov.on.ca/water	521-3450
Health Services, City of Ottawa ottawa.ca	722-2200
Private Well Water Quality Inquiries, Health Services	722-2200
Private Well Water Quality Testing Lab, Ontario Ministry of Health	736-6800
Record a Water Meter Reading, 24-hour Recording, City of Ottawa	560-1340
Tours of the Britannia Water Purification Plant, City of Ottawa	580-2424 x 22134
Water Bill Inquiries, City of Ottawa	560-2080
Water Information Line (recorded information), City of Ottawa	560-6089
Water Related Emergencies, 24-hour Service, City of Ottawa	580-2400
Wise Use of Water Information, City of Ottawa	560-6089

Or visit the City's web site at ottawa.ca/water



Did you know...

*The City treats an average of
338 million litres of drinking water a day?
Enough water to fill 5000 backyard swimming pools.*