

LEAD

The most common source of lead in tap water is the plumbing in your home.

Lead can sometimes get into your water as it passes through lead plumbing inside your home, or from a lead pipe that connects your home to our water pipe.

The City is committed to delivering the highest quality drinking water to all residents and businesses. We have rigorous safeguards, which include regular testing for lead and improvements in corrosion control, to make sure your tap water meets or surpasses all health standards. We will also continue to (1) replace lead service lines and lead joints if we find them in our system,* (2) test the water for lead and corrosivity, and (3) use lead-free pipes and fitting in our system.

While these tests ensure that the ground and imported water we deliver is virtually lead free, there is risk of lead getting into your water as it passes through old plumbing inside your home or business.

Health effects from high levels of lead.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets standards related to lead in drinking water. Lead levels that exceed these standards could cause serious damage to the brain, kidneys, nervous system and red blood cells. The greatest risk, even with short-term exposure, is to young children under six years of age and pregnant women.

Assessing your exposure to lead.

Lead levels in drinking water are more likely to be higher if:

1. Your home has faucets or fittings made of brass that contain some lead, or
2. Your home or water system has lead pipes or has a lead service line, or
3. Your home has copper pipes with lead solder, AND
 - Your home is more than 30 years old, or
 - You have naturally soft or acidic water, or
 - Water often sits in the pipes for several hours

Minimizing your exposure.

You cannot see, smell or taste lead, and boiling water will not remove lead. Although the water leading up to your home is treated and monitored for lead, you can further minimize the risk of lead in your home's tap water by following these simple steps:

1. Flush your tap before drinking or cooking with water, if the water in the faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. The longer the water lies dormant in your home's plumbing, the more lead it might contain. Flush your tap with cold water for 30 seconds before using. To conserve water, catch the running water and use it to water your plants. Flushing your taps is a sensible protective measure but it's not a long-term solution.
2. Only use cold water for cooking, drinking and preparing baby formula. Hot water has the potential to contain more lead than cold water. When you need hot water, heat cold water on the stove or in the microwave.
3. Remove loose lead solder and debris from plumbing. In newly constructed homes or homes in which the plumbing was recently replaced, remove the strainers from each faucet and run the water for 3 to 5 minutes. When replacing or working on pipes, be sure to use materials that are lead-free. Use of lead-based solders has been banned.
4. When replacing or installing fixtures, look for the "lead free" label. Under the 2011 Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act, fixtures must have 0.25% lead or less to be considered "lead free."

*Our records show that there are no lead service lines in the system.



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FAQs

Frequently asked questions about lead

Is lead in water regulated and does the City of Santa Ana comply with standards?

Yes and yes. The EPA's lead standard is an action level that requires treatment modifications if lead test results exceed 15 parts per billion (ppb) in more than 10 percent of first draw samples taken from household taps. In 2015, our certified specialists collected 80 samples (above the state's requirement of 50) for lead and copper, both which were below state and federal maximum allowable levels. We also regularly conduct tests in our distribution system in accordance with the EPA regulatory requirements. For more information on our testing for lead, view the latest Consumer Confidence Report by visiting santaanaccr.com.

Does that mean I do not have lead in my water?

Not necessarily. You might have lead in your drinking water if your plumbing system has lead pipes or if lead solder was used in the joints of copper pipes. Homes built before 1930 are more likely to have lead plumbing systems.

How can I tell if I have lead pipes?

Lead pipes are a dull grey color and scratch easily revealing a shiny surface. Lead solder used to join copper pipes is a silver or grey color. If your house was built before January 1986, you are more likely to have lead-soldered joints. If you do, the chance of the lead leaking into your drinking water is greater when water has been standing in the pipes for many hours. Kits that test for the presence of lead in solder are available at some hardware stores.

Should I flush my faucets every morning before using it for drinking and food prep?

No. If you know you have old pipes or lead solder was used on your copper piping and if the water in the faucet has gone unused for more than six hours, flush your tap before drinking or cooking with water. The longer the water lies dormant in your home's plumbing, the more lead it might contain. Flush your tap with cold water for 30 seconds.

Will electrical grounding increase my lead levels?

Possibly. If grounding wires from electrical systems (such as telephone) are attached to your household plumbing, your exposure to lead may be greater since electric current accelerates corrosion of lead in pipes. You can pay an electrician to check the wiring in your home. Be sure to not remove wires from pipes unless a qualified electrician installs an adequate alternative grounding system.

Do I need a home treatment device for lead?

There are many home treatment devices that can be effective in reducing lead, and the decision is a personal one. However, be sure to avoid misleading or false claims and scare tactics. Be especially wary of "free" water testing offered by a salesperson to determine your water quality; many such tests are inaccurate or misleading. Before you purchase a treatment device, be sure the device is certified for effective lead reduction and verify the claims of the manufacturer by contacting the National Sanitation Foundation International or the Water Quality Association.

Is it safe to use my water crock?

It depends. Lead is used in the glazes or decorations covering the surfaces of some ceramic dishes, including water crocks. This lead can get into water that is stored in water crocks (this is called "leaching"). Most water crocks in common use that are purchased in the U.S. do not pose a lead hazard. Water crocks made outside the U.S. may contain high level of lead. Do not use these water crocks unless they have been tested to be lead free.

For more health information about lead from other sources search for lead at the California Department of Health Services website: www.cdph.ca.gov and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov.

Getting your water tested for lead

Since you cannot see, taste or smell lead dissolved in water, testing is the only sure way of knowing. The City of Santa Ana does not provide lead testing for individual residents. You can pay to have your water tested by a certified laboratory, which typically costs \$20 - \$100.

For more information:

- Contact EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act Hotline by calling 1-800-426-4791.
- Visit the California Department of Environmental Protection's website at calepa.ca.gov.

