



# West Milford Municipal Utilities Authority

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER

The West Milford MUA Parkway System found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Please read this information closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

### Health effects of Lead

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones, and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.

### Sources of Lead

Lead is a common metal found in the environment. Drinking water is one possible source of lead exposure. The main sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust or soil, and some plumbing materials. In addition, lead can be found in certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, food, and cosmetics. Other sources include exposure in the work place and exposure from certain hobbies.

Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminants in that it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like rivers and lakes. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of the corrosion, or wearing away, of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and household plumbing. These materials include lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, brass and chrome-brass faucets, and in some cases, pipes made of lead that connect houses and buildings to water mains (service lines).

New brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as “lead-free”, may contribute lead to drinking water. The law currently allows end-use brass fixtures, such as faucets, with up to 0.25 percent lead to be labeled as “lead free”. However, prior to January 4, 2014, “lead free” allowed up to 8 percent lead content of the wetted surfaces of plumbing products including those labeled National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) certified. Consumers should be aware of this when choosing fixtures and take appropriate precautions.

EPA estimates that up to 20 percent of a person’s potential exposure to lead may come from drinking water. Infants who consume mostly formula mixed with lead-containing water can receive 40 to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water.

When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems containing lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon if the water has not been used all day, can contain fairly high levels of lead.

### **Steps you can take to reduce exposure to lead in drinking water**

1. **Run the water to flush out lead.** Let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. The longer the water resides in plumbing the more lead it may contain. Flushing the tap means running the cold-water faucet for about 15-30 seconds. Although toilet flushing or showering flushes water through a portion of the plumbing system, you still need to flush the water in each faucet before using it for drinking or cooking. Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your health. It usually uses less than one gallon of water.

2. **Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula.** Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold tap and then heat it. Do not use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula.

3. **Do not boil water to remove lead.** Boiling water will not reduce lead.

4. **Look for alternative sources or treatment of water.** You may want to consider purchasing bottled water or a water filter. Be sure the filter is approved to reduce lead or contact NSF International at 1-800-NSF-8010 or [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org) for information on performance standards for water filters. Be sure to maintain and replace a filter device in accordance with the manufacturer.

5. **Get your child tested.** Contact your local health department or healthcare provider to find out how you can get your child tested for lead if you are concerned about lead exposure. Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects of lead.

For more information, call us at 973-506-7330 or visit our website at [www.westmilfordmua.org](http://www.westmilfordmua.org). For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's website at, <http://www.epa.gov/lead>, call the National Lead Information Center at 800-424-LEAD or Safe Drinking Water Act hotline at 1-800-426-4791, or contact your health care provider.

**Test your water for lead.** Call us at 973-506-7330 to find out how to get your water tested for lead. We can give you information on how to obtain a list of certified laboratories that can assist you in further sampling. You may also contact us to obtain a translated copy of the public education materials or to request assistance in the appropriate language.

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