Why is Lead a Problem?

Drinking water contaminated with lead poses a significant danger to public health.

- Increased blood pressure
- Kidney problems
- Reproductive problems
- Memory loss
- Increased risk of birth defects
- Increased risk of lead poisoning

The EPA suggests the following steps to minimize lead in your drinking water.

1. Determine the quality of your water.
2. Take action.

What You Can Do About Lead in Your Drinking Water

- Consider replacing pipes, sediments, and plumbing fixtures that contain lead.
- Lead in drinking water usually comes from corrosion of pipes, solders, or fixtures made of lead or brass that carry water from a treatment plant to houses or buildings.
- Corrosion occurs when these plumbing materials come into contact with corrosive water, such as water with low pH.
- Drinking water contaminated with lead poses a significant danger to public health.
- Lead in drinking water usually comes from the environment or from plumbing systems. There are an estimated 6.1–22 million lead pipes in the United States, which supply about 15–25 million people.
- Water systems must routinely test tap water and notify homeowners and states of the test results. When they find lead above the lead action level, they must, as appropriate:
  - Apply corrosion control treatments (such as adjusting the pH of the water).
  - Provide educational materials to consumers (and others).
  - Test water quality conditions, and test and treat the source water.
  - If necessary, replace lead pipes owned by the water system.
- Water systems must also report information on their sampling activities to the state. The state then reports this information to EPA's Safe Drinking Water Information System. The EPA uses this database to oversee and monitor compliance with the rule.
- The lead action level established by the rule is 15 parts per billion in over 10 percent of the water samples. This level, when exceeded, indicates to water systems that corrosion control is needed or not working correctly.
- The EPA introduced the Lead and Copper Rule in 1991—a complex regulation that requires collaboration among the EPA, states, water systems, and homeowners.