

TOP 10 MYTHS ABOUT LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

It can be hard to believe that lead is still a danger in America's drinking water, because so many people think it's a problem that was solved in the 1970s. That has resulted in many myths that can put people at risk. The unfortunate fact is that lead is still very much a present threat, for a variety of reasons. Here, we look at some common misconceptions about lead in drinking water, and the surprising facts that refute them.

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MYTH 1: THERE'S A "SAFE" LEVEL OF LEAD IN WATER.

Fifteen parts per billion was once a U.S. EPA standard to determine federal compliance for utilities, but it was never meant to be a health standard. In fact, the EPA has now deemed zero parts per billion is the maximum allowable level for lead contaminants in water. The World Health Organization also agrees that there is no safe level of lead exposure—for children or adults.



2

MYTH 2: TESTING WILL ALWAYS REVEAL IF THERE IS LEAD IN YOUR WATER.

This seems like a simple one, however it gets complicated because there are TWO main kinds of lead contamination: soluble and particle. Soluble means the lead dissolves in the water, similar to sugar. Soluble lead WILL show up in tests, because it permeates every sample. Particle lead, however, means that there are literally tiny pieces of metal floating in the water that are contaminated with lead. These particles are much harder to detect, because it depends on whether any particles end up in the sample that is drawn.



3

MYTH 3: LEAD ISN'T A PROBLEM IN NEWER HOMES.

The ban on lead plumbing began in 1986. However, plumbing parts sold since then are still allowed to have up to 0.2 percent in solders and up to 8 percent in pipes and fittings. In particular, solder with traces of lead used to join copper pipes can corrode and get into the water stream.



4

MYTH 4: A CLEAN MUNICIPAL WATER REPORT CARD MEANS YOUR HOME IS SAFE.

Lead contamination often begins INSIDE the home, with old or aging pipes that leach lead into water that was clean when it arrived from the local water utility. Other possible initiation points include underground pipes connecting to the water main and interior taps.



5

MYTH 5: RUNNING THE TAP FIRST CAN "FLUSH OUT" LEAD.

In theory, the practice makes some sense, but consider this: running the faucet actually draws older water forward—water that could have been sitting in pipes longer, steeping in lead. It also goes back to the truth of "no safe level." Removing lead pipes or installing filters for lead are the only true solutions.



6

MYTH 6: BOILING HELPS.

Wrong. It actually increases the concentration of lead. Never do this.



7

MYTH 7: MOST CITIES TREAT THEIR WATER TO CONTROL CORROSION, PROTECTING IT FROM LEAD.

Many do treat, but there are limitations to its effectiveness. It has an especially low success rate in preventing lead particles.



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MYTH 8: LEAD IN WATER ISN'T AN ISSUE IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

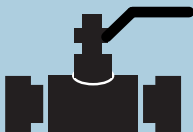
Lead can be anywhere—schools, daycare centers, college campuses, libraries, churches, shopping centers. Even worse, most schools aren't even tested.



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MYTH 9: PARTIAL REPLACEMENT OF LEAD PIPES IS SAFE.

In truth, a repair job actually kicks up more lead that can remain for weeks or months—sometimes years—after partial replacement. It's a serious health risk.



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MYTH 10: ALL WATER FILTERS REMOVE LEAD.

To remove lead, a filter must be tested and certified to NSF/ANSI 53 and 58 standards. Not all filters are. In fact, many only exist to improve water's taste (by removing chlorine and other additives), not its healthiness.

