

**Iowa City Water Division Lead Reduction
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
Available digitally at www.icgov.org/water**

How can I minimize the amount of lead in my drinking water?

- Flush your tap before drinking or cooking when the water is unused for more than six hours.
 - o The more time water has been stagnant in pipes, the more lead it may contain. Before drinking, flush your home's pipes by running the tap, taking a shower, doing laundry, or doing a load of dishes. The amount of time to run the water will depend on whether your home has a lead service line or not, as well as the length and diameter of the service line and the amount of plumbing in your home.
 - o Although toilet use or showering moves water through a portion of the plumbing system, you still need to flush the water at each faucet before use because older faucets may be made of materials containing lead or have leaded debris caught in the aerator screen.
- Clean faucet aerator screens.
 - o Regularly remove and clean your faucet's screen (also known as an aerator). Sediment, debris, and lead particles can collect in your aerator. If lead particles are caught in the aerator, lead can get into your water.
- Use cold water for drinking water, cooking or making baby formula.
 - o Hot water can dissolve lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, use the cold tap and heat the water on the stove or in a microwave.
 - o Boiling water does not remove lead, and prolonged boiling can concentrate lead levels.
 - o Do not use hot water for drinking, cooking, or making baby formula.
- Flush the home plumbing periodically and after changes to the plumbing system.
 - o Loose leaded debris from the plumbing materials can get caught in faucet aerators/strainers. To flush the home's plumbing, remove the faucet strainer/aerators from all taps and run the water from three to five minutes.
- Have an electrician check your grounding wire.
 - o Many homes connect their main electrical ground to the water pipes. This electrical connection may cause corrosion of pipe materials. A licensed electrician will be able to determine if the ground can be relocated. Do not attempt to change the wiring yourself as improper grounding can cause electrical shock and fire hazards.
- Properly operate and maintain any in-home water treatment devices.
 - o The Iowa City Water Division ensures the drinking water is non-corrosive. If an in-home treatment device is used like a whole home softening unit or a reverse osmosis system, then the chemistry of the water will change. This may cause the water to become more corrosive. Conversely, an in-home system that is not maintained may not be providing contaminant reduction and in some cases can contribute contaminants.
- Review the [City's Lead Service Inventory](#) map
 - o This map will identify the home's risk for having a lead or lead contaminated service line. The Lead Reduction Program provides resources for lead mitigation.
- Learn about construction in your neighborhood.
 - o Construction or maintenance work could disturb your service line. Construction may cause more lead to be released from a lead service line or galvanized service line if present.
- Consult with a family doctor or pediatrician.
 - o These professionals can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects.

What do the tiers on the [Iowa City Lead Service Inventory map](#) mean?

The tiers and their meaning is part of the [Federal Lead and Copper Rule Revisions](#) (§ 141.86).

- Tier 1: Single family home with a lead service line
- Tier 2: Buildings or multi-family homes with a lead service line
- Tier 3: Single family home with a lead-contaminated galvanized iron service line
- Tier 4: Single family home with copper pipes joined by leaded solder
- Tier 5: Homes and buildings with service lines representative of other commonly used materials
- LSU – Lead Service Unknown: Homes and buildings with characteristics indicating a risk for lead or lead contaminated materials without evidence proving lead or leaded materials are not present

How did the City determine my home’s lead service tier?

City staff consulted many information sources to determine lead risk and assign a tier. These sources included water main tap records, building permits, build year from the assessor’s office, service leak repair records, discussions with local plumbers and retirees from the trades, statistics associated with the likelihood for finding a lead service line, and state and local laws.

Unfortunately, all of these sources are imperfect and the City was conservative in the assignment of lead risk. Therefore, finding any mention of lead is sufficient to characterize a dwelling as Tier 1 through 3. Tier 4 homes are generally those built between 1950 and 1988. LSU homes are typically built before 1950 without evidence the service line of service line material.

If a homeowner has an LSU designation, this property is eligible for the Service Line Materials Verification Dig cost-share. Please visit the [Lead Reduction Program eligibility](#) document for more information.

How can I get my service line replaced?

Contact a local excavating or plumbing contractor to request a quote for the service line replacement. If you have a lead service line or a suspected lead service line, be sure to inform the contractor you are interested in using the City’s cost-share reimbursement program.

The contractor will be responsible for arranging the work which includes the following as applicable:

- All excavations require a locate request for underground utilities by calling 811
- Service line work on the residential property requires a “Residential Plumbing Permit”
- Service line work in the public right-of-way requires a “Right-of-Way Excavation” or a “Right-of-Way Excavation – Water Tap” permit

These notices and permits give the City notice to be present to verify the service line materials.

How does lead get into drinking water?

Lead enters drinking water primarily from corrosion or wearing of home plumbing materials containing lead, like lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, brass and chrome-plated brass faucets, and in some cases, pipes made of lead. Lead pipes that connect houses and buildings to water mains are also known as service lines.

Where can I find more information about lead in drinking water?

The US EPA Basic Information about Lead in Drinking Water website at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lead> the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791, or call the Iowa City Water Division at 319-356-5160.

Sample results from regulatory lead testing are published in the annual Consumer Confidence Report.

How do I test for lead in my drinking water?

Drinking water lead tests do not prove the existence or lack of lead or lead-contaminated materials. Drinking water lead tests provide a single data point about the lead content of the drinking water in your home at the time of the test. The City maintains the chemistry of the water to prevent lead leaching into the drinking water from your plumbing. Therefore, a non-detect of lead test result only confirms corrosion control measures are effective, but does not inform you if there is or is not a source of lead.

To request a test for drinking water lead, contact the Iowa City Water Division at 319-356-5160 to schedule an appointment to have your water tested. Staff will help you evaluate your water service material, collect a sample, and submit the sample for analysis to a state certified laboratory. There is no fee for this service but depending on demand and the limited information these tests provide the samples will be scheduled as staffing allows.

Alternatively, you may contact the University of Iowa's [Get the Lead Out](#) Iowa program to request a lead sample kit or contact a certified laboratory to have your water tested for lead.

For information on sources of lead that include service lines and interior plumbing, please visit <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water#getinto>.

Can commercially available water filters remove lead out of drinking water?

Yes. Please review the Faucets, Filters, and Fountains section of the [Lead Reduction Program](#) to learn more about the NSF/ANSI standards used to designate filtration devices capable of removing lead.

Filtration systems also require ongoing maintenance such as cleaning or installing new cartridges.

Who is most susceptible to lead in drinking water?

Infants, children, and pregnant women are typically more vulnerable to lead in drinking water. Lead in drinking water can increase a person's total lead exposure, particularly for infants who drink baby formulas and concentrated juices that are mixed with water. Lead can build up in the body over many years and cause damage to the brain, red blood cells, and kidneys. Family doctors, pediatricians, or County Health professionals can provide more information about the health effects of lead.

Who is responsible for removing lead from a water system?

The Iowa City Water Division is responsible for ensuring the water it distributes is non-corrosive and all materials installed in the distribution system and water meters are considered "lead-free" as defined by law. Individual homeowners or property owners are responsible for the maintenance and replacement of a home's water service line and plumbing.

Do I need to worry about owning a lead line or older plumbing?

Having lead pipe or solder in your water service does not automatically mean your drinking water contains lead. There is no fool proof way to know if your drinking water has lead due to the many factors effecting potential lead contamination such as: changes to your plumbing, the amount of time the water is stagnant in your plumbing in between uses, or lead-contaminated fixtures.

If you disturb any lead pipes for maintenance or repairs, it is recommended that the entire lead pipe is replaced, and the plumbing thoroughly flushed.

Damaging a lead service line is known to cause lead exposure by removing the protective internal lining of the pipe and allowing the drinking water to contact lead.

How do I apply for service line insurance?

Please contact your homeowner’s insurance provider or Service Line Warranties of America (www.slwofa.com). The City does not express a preference for the insurance provider selected. The City does strongly encourage property owners, regardless of their lead service status, to have service line insurance. Service line repairs generally cost thousands of dollars and some homes have service lines configured under pavement or other surface infrastructure that could cause a repair to cost tens of thousands of dollars.

Is reimbursement from the City considered taxable income?

The City will send a 1099-MISC to all reimbursement recipients. Each owner’s tax situation may be different. Please consult with your tax professional about whether the reimbursement is taxable income.

Why do I have to submit a W-9 with my reimbursement request?

The W-9 is necessary for the City to process the reimbursement payment through the accounting software and to issue end-of-year tax forms. The City cannot reimburse without a W-9.

How long before I receive my reimbursement?

An approved reimbursement may take as much as a month to be received. The City reserves the right to deny a reimbursement request if the submitted materials are insufficient to determine eligible expenses or are for ineligible work.

What are other sources of lead?

Lead can be present in many materials in older homes such as paint or metal alloys that contain higher percentages of lead. Lead may also be present in modern consumer goods such as cosmetics, hobby materials, or even in ground cinnamon.

The most recent Federal Law definition of “lead free” was enacted in 2014 which is a product that contains no more than 0.25% lead in the wetted surfaces of pipes and fittings. Between 1988 and 2014 fixtures and solder could contain as much as 8% lead. Prior to 1988 solder could be as much as 50% lead. To learn more about how to identify “lead free” materials, please use this guide provided by the EPA:

https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-06/how-to-id-lead-free-certified-drinking-water-products-epa_june-2024.pdf.