

# Lead in drinking water

This leaflet provides you with some  
general information about keeping  
safe in your home and reducing the risk  
of accidents.



## How do I know if lead could be present in my drinking water?

If you have an older property and are concerned, checking the water pipes under the kitchen sink will often show whether or not they are lead. Lead pipes are dull grey in colour, are easily scratched to reveal shiny silver metal and have slight bulges at joints. As it is not easy to see much of the water supply pipework, a water sample is often the only way to identify the presence of lead in the system.

**This can be arranged through Aberdeenshire Council Environmental Health Service by calling 0345 608 1207 or email [environmental@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:environmental@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)**

If the analysis of your water sample shows that the lead level is higher than the current standard, we would advise you to consider replacing your lead pipes as soon as possible.

## How does lead get into drinking water?

Occasional lead occurs naturally in groundwater, however, this is a rare situation in the UK and lead is not present in the water within our wider public water supply network.

Before 1970, many smaller water

pipes were made from lead. Although lead pipes have not been allowed for this purpose for over four decades, in older properties it remains possible that part or all of the underground service pipe connecting the water main in the street to your kitchen tap may be made from lead. It is also possible that some original lead plumbing remains within older properties especially if the kitchen has not been modernised.

A less common cause of lead in drinking water is the illegal use of lead based solder to join together sections of copper pipe. Lead solder is still sold for use on closed central heating systems and mistakes occasionally happen whereby unqualified plumbers or householders use lead solder on drinking water pipes contrary to the law.

For all these reasons, the amount of lead in drinking water at a particular property may sometimes be above the health based standard.

## What to do if you have lead in your drinking water

**If you are connected to the public mains** then you should contact the Scottish Water Customer Helpline on **0800 0778 778** or email **[customer.services@scottishwater.co.uk](mailto:customer.services@scottishwater.co.uk)**.

They will be able to give you further advice and will check their own supply pipes to your property.

**If you get your water from a private supply** and you own your home or are a private tenant, then financial assistance can be provided to address the adequacy and wholesomeness of the water supply.

Grants of up to £800 are available to improve private water supplies, which includes the replacement of lead piping. Additional grant can be awarded depending upon costs and the applicant's financial circumstances. More information can be found at [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/environment/environmental-protection/](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/environment/environmental-protection/) or call Aberdeenshire Council on **0345 608 1207**.

What can I do if I am unable to replace my lead pipes immediately but I am still concerned about lead?

If lead pipes are causing high lead levels in your drinking water, you can take some simple short-term precautions.

Do not drink water that has been standing in the pipes for long periods, for example, overnight, or if no one has been in for several hours. In these circumstances, draw

off a washing-up bowlful of water from the kitchen tap to clear the water which has been standing in the pipes. This need not be wasted but can be used to water plants or for something other than drinking or cooking.

If the length of lead pipes exceeds 40 metres, a larger amount of water will need to be drawn off. You can then use the water from the kitchen tap as usual.

## Contact Us

For further information please access Aberdeenshire Council's Environmental Services at [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/environment/environmental-protection/](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/environment/environmental-protection/) or call Aberdeenshire Council on **0345 608 1207** or email [environmental@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:environmental@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)



