



## **Water and Lead Concerns**

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **What is lead?**

Lead is a metal that is found naturally all over the world. It can be toxic to humans and animals if it is swallowed or inhaled.

#### **Where is lead found?**

Lead can be found in many parts of our environment – air, soil, water, and even inside our homes. Lead and lead compounds have been used in a wide variety of products, including paint, ceramics, pipes and plumbing materials, gasoline, batteries, and cosmetics. As we've learned more about the dangers of lead, fewer and fewer products with lead in them are being made today.

#### **What is lead poisoning?**

Lead poisoning is a medical condition where lead, a heavy metal, builds up in the body. It can occur in adults, but is a greater problem among children.

#### **What are the symptoms of lead poisoning?**

Symptoms among children can include:

- Developmental delays
- Learning difficulties
- Irritability
- Loss of energy
- Weight loss
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Lack of appetite
- Constipation
- Hearing loss

#### **Is Philadelphia at Risk?**

No. Philadelphia has not made any changes to its water treatment or where it gets its water from. Philadelphia's drinking water sources (the rivers) do not contain detectable levels of lead. Because we're also concerned about lead from the pipes in the homes in Philadelphia, the Water Department treats the water with an anti-corrosion treatment that helps prevent lead from leaching out of household pipes as it travels to your faucet. Philadelphia's water supply is carefully monitored to make sure that our citizens, especially our children, are sufficiently protected from lead that could be found in drinking water.



## **Does lead poisoning happen in Philadelphia?**

Yes. Lead poisoning can happen in Philadelphia. Many homes in Philadelphia were built before 1978, which means that they may have lead-containing paint. Children living in homes with lead-based paint can swallow or inhale the lead that's in paint chips or paint dust. In the past, Philadelphia also had factories that produced lead and lead-containing products, which may have left lead in our soil. Lead can also be found in some jewelry, makeup, toys, and dishware. However, there is no evidence that Philadelphia's water is a source of lead poisoning.

## **What does Philadelphia do to prevent lead poisoning?**

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health works with local pediatricians and doctors to make sure that all children in Philadelphia are tested for lead at 12 and 24 months or age, and treated as needed. If a child has a high lead level, the Health Department works with home and building owners to make sure that any sources of lead in the house (such as lead paint) are found and taken care of.

## **How can I protect my family from lead poisoning?**

People can prevent lead poisoning through removing sources of lead in the home. Some tips include:

- Keep children away from lead paint and lead dust.
- Clean around windows, play areas, and floors often.
- If you notice chipping paint, cover it right away with contact paper or duct tape and repair it quickly.
- Check your house for lead, and make sure all repairs are done safely without stirring up lead dust.
- Get your children tested for lead at age 12-24 months.
- Give your children foods with calcium, iron, and vitamin C, which may help keep lead out of the body.
- Learn more about controlling the sources of lead in your home at:  
[www.phila.gov/leadhealthyhomes](http://www.phila.gov/leadhealthyhomes).

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