



TOWN OF GULF STREAM

PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER.

The Town of Gulf Stream found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Please read this information closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

Health effects of lead. Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones, and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.

Lead is a common metal found throughout the environment in lead-based paint, air, soil, household dust, food, certain types of pottery porcelain and pewter, and water. Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminants in that it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like rivers and lakes. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of the corrosion, or wearing away, of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and household plumbing. These materials include lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, brass and chrome plated brass faucets, and in some cases, pipes made of lead that connect your house to the water main (service lines). In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing greater than 0.2% lead and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes and other plumbing materials to 8.0%.

When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems containing lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means that the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon after returning from work or school, can contain fairly high levels of lead.

Steps you can take in the home to reduce exposure to lead in drinking water. Although the Town continues to take steps to ensure the quality of our water supply, lead levels in some homes or buildings can be high. Test results indicate that this is an issue with individual buildings and not the Town's water distribution system. To find out whether you need to take action in your own home, have your drinking water tested to determine if it contains excessive concentrations of lead.

Testing the water is essential because you cannot see, taste or smell lead in drinking water. Some local laboratories that can provide this service are listed at the end of this letter.

If a water test indicates that the drinking water drawn from a tap in your home contains lead above 15 ppb, then you should take the following precautions:

- (1) Let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in the faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. The longer water resides in your home's plumbing the more lead it may contain. Flushing the tap means running the cold water until the water gets noticeably colder, usually about 15-30 seconds. If your house has a lead service line to the water main, you may have to flush the water for a longer time, perhaps one minute, before drinking. Although toilet flushing or showering flushes water through a portion of your home's plumbing system, you will need to flush the water in each faucet before using it for drinking or cooking. Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your family's health. To conserve water, fill a couple of bottles for drinking water after flushing the tap, and whenever possible use the first flush to wash the dishes or water the plants. If you live in a high-rise building, letting the water flow before using it may not lessen your risk from lead. The plumbing systems have more, and sometimes larger pipes than smaller buildings. Ask your landlord for help in locating the source of lead and for advice on reducing the lead level.
- (2) Try not to cook with, or drink water from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold tap and heat it on the stove. Boiling water does not reduce lead levels. Hot water from the tap should never be used to prepare baby formula.
- (3) Remove loose lead solder and debris from the plumbing materials installed in newly constructed homes, or homes in which the plumbing has recently been replaced, by removing the faucet strainers from all taps and running the water from 3 to 5 minutes. Thereafter, periodically remove the strainers and flush out any debris that has accumulated over time.
- (4) If your copper pipes are joined with lead solder that has been installed illegally since it was banned in 1986, notify the plumber who did the work and ask that he or she replace the lead solder with lead-free solder. Lead solder looks dull gray, and when scratched with a key looks shiny. In addition notify the Palm Beach County Health Department about the violation.
- (5) Determine whether or not the service line that connects your home or apartment to the water main is made of lead. The best way to determine if your service line is made of lead is by either hiring a licensed plumber to inspect the line or by contacting the plumbing contractor who installed the line. You can identify the plumbing contractor by checking the city's record of building permits which should be maintained in the files of the Building Department. A licensed plumber can at the same time check to see if your home's plumbing contains lead solder, lead pipes, or pipe fittings that contain lead. Acceptable replacement alternatives include copper, steel, iron and plastic pipes.

- (6) Have an electrician check your wiring. If grounding wires from the electrical system are attached to your pipes, corrosion may be greater. Check with a licensed electrician or your local electrical code to determine if your wiring can be grounded elsewhere. DO NOT attempt to change the wiring yourself because improper grounding can cause electrical shock and fire hazards.

The steps described above will reduce the lead concentrations in your drinking water. However, if a water test indicates that the drinking water coming from your tap contains lead concentrations in excess of 15 ppb after flushing, then you may want to take the following additional measures:

- (1) Purchase or lease a home treatment device. Home treatment devices are limited in that each unit treats only the water that flows from the faucet to which it is connected, and all of the devices require periodic maintenance and replacement. Devices such as reverse osmosis systems or distillers can effectively remove lead from your drinking water. Some activated carbon filters may reduce lead levels at the tap, however all lead reduction claims should be investigated. Be sure to check the actual performance of a specific home treatment device before and after installing the unit.
- (2) Purchase bottled water for drinking and cooking.

You can consult a variety of sources for additional information. Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects of lead. State and local government agencies that can be contacted include:

- (1) The Town of Gulf Stream at 561-276-5116 can provide you with information about your community's water supply and a list of local laboratories that have been certified by EPA for testing water quality;
- (2) Palm Beach County Building Department at 561-233-5170 can provide you with information about building permit records that should contain the names of plumbing contractors that plumbed your home if your home was built before 2011, the City of Delray Beach Building Department at 561-243-7200 can provide you with information regarding your home if it was built after 2011; and
- (3) The Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Environmental Health Programs at 850-245-4240 or the Florida Department of Health, Palm Beach County at 561-840-4500 can provide you with information about the health effects of lead and how you can have your child's blood tested.
- (4) The following is a list of some State approved laboratories in your area that you can call to have your water tested for lead:

Environmental Services of South Florida Inc. 561-848-7805

Florida-Spectrum Environmental Services Inc. 954-978-6400

Nationwide Laboratory Services

954-633-3580

U S Biosystems Inc.

561-447-7373

Elevated levels of lead in Gulf Stream. Test results indicate that the elevated levels of lead are isolated and not a system wide problem. The most recent test, which occurred in May of 2019, showed elevated levels at the Gulf Stream Police Department, as well as one of the multifamily buildings along A1A. The building has been notified of its test results and those residents should follow up with building management. The Town will address the elevated levels of lead at the Police Department building by determining what service line or other plumbing needs to be replaced.

For more information, call us at 561-276-5116, or visit our Web site at <http://www.gulf-stream.org>. For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/lead> or contact your health care provider.