

FAQS ABOUT LEAD



WHAT IS LEAD?

Lead is a common metallic element in nature and can be found in air, soil, and water. It is also a powerful toxin that is harmful to human health. Lead was used for centuries in plumbing because of its pliability and resistance to leaks. In 1986, lead pipes were banned in the United States, and plumbing materials were required to meet federal “lead-free” specifications.

WHAT DOES PENNICHUCK DO TO PROTECT MY HOUSEHOLD FROM LEAD?

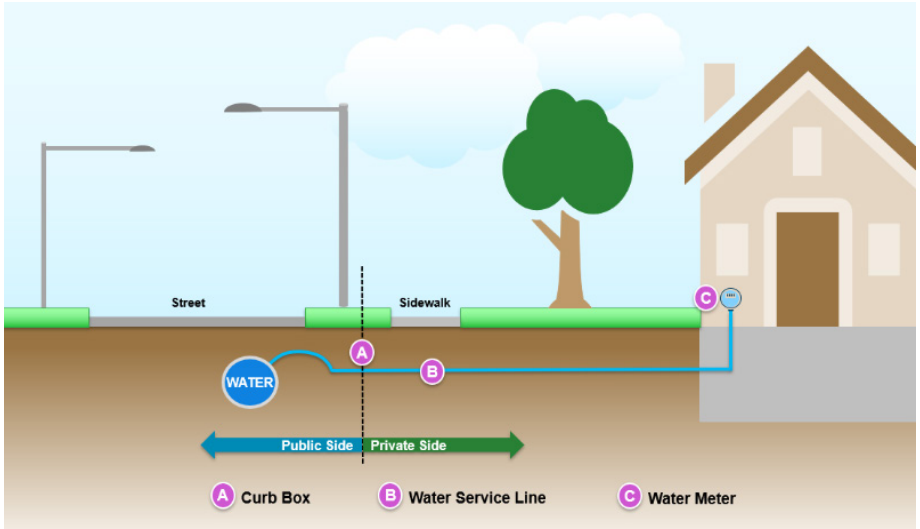
Water distributed from Pennichuck facilities is lead free. To prevent lead from dissolving into water from lead service lines or home plumbing, Pennichuck adjusts the water’s chemistry at our facilities through a process known as corrosion control. While corrosion control can reduce risks, the best way to ensure your home is safe from lead exposure through water is to remove any potential sources of lead such as a lead service line or lead plumbing and fixtures within your home. We sample water at homes considered to be high risk to ensure that corrosion control remains effective. This water sampling is an ongoing program at Pennichuck. If you wish to be considered for this program, please visit our website at www.pennichuck.com/lead-and-copper-sampling-volunteer-form. Please note that we can only select a specific amount of participants, so filling out this form does not guarantee selection but expresses your willingness to participate.

WHY IS LEAD A HEALTH RISK AND WHERE CAN I GO TO LEARN MORE?

Lead is a toxic metal that can cause immediate effects at high doses and long-term effects if it builds up in the body over many years. Lead can cause brain and kidney damage in addition to effects on the blood and vitamin D metabolism. Young children are particularly vulnerable because the physical and behavioral effects of lead occur at lower exposure levels in children than in adults. In children, low levels of exposure have been linked to damage to the central and peripheral nervous system, learning disabilities, shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired formation and function of blood cells. While people are more commonly exposed to lead through paint, soil, and dust, the U.S. EPA estimates that infants who consume mostly mixed formula can receive 40 percent to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water.

WHO OWNS THE SERVICE LINE?

As the property owner, you own and are responsible for your service line from the curb stop into your home or business. Pennichuck owns and maintains the service line from the curb stop to the water main. If you are considering a service line replacement, give us a call at 800-553-5191 to coordinate your service line replacement with water main replacements we may be doing in your area. This could potentially save you money on your service line replacement.



HOW DO I KNOW IF MY HOME HAS A LEAD SERVICE LINE OR LEAD PLUMBING?

You may be able to determine on your own if your service line is made of lead. Service lines typically enter the home or business in the basement or crawl space. If the pipe is lead, it will have a dull finish that becomes shiny when scratched with a key or coin. Additionally, using a magnet can help you identify a lead pipe because even a strong magnet will not adhere to lead. Visit our website at www.pennichuck.com/service-line-inventory-project for details. There, you'll find an interactive map to search your address and view what we have identified as your service line pipe material. For internal plumbing, consult a licensed plumber.

IS WATER THE ONLY SOURCE OF LEAD IN HOME AND BUSINESSES?

No, in fact, lead in drinking water generally represents only about one-fifth of total exposure, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, drinking water can account for more than half of lead exposure in children because of their lower body weight. Additionally, because no level of lead is considered safe, eliminating potential sources of lead is strongly advised.

HOW DOES LEAD GET INTO DRINKING WATER/HOW WILL I KNOW?

Water distributed from Pennichuck facilities is lead free when it flows from our facilities through the water mains running beneath the streets. In some older homes, lead may be present in the home's plumbing or in the service line that connects the home to the water system. Lead in service pipes or plumbing can dissolve or break off into the water and end up at the tap. Because it is colorless and tasteless, lead is not readily apparent in water. In fact, the only way to be certain whether your drinking water contains lead is to have your water tested by a certified laboratory.

HOW MUCH LEAD IN WATER IS TOO MUCH?

Lead can be harmful even at very low levels and can accumulate in our bodies over time. Therefore, wherever possible, steps should be taken to reduce or eliminate your household's exposure to lead. While risks vary based on the individual, circumstances, and the amount of water consumed, it's important to note that no concentration of lead is considered safe. Households with pregnant people, infants, or young children are most vulnerable to the harmful effects of lead at low levels.

IS IT SAFE TO SHOWER IN WATER THAT CONTAINS LEAD?

Lead is not absorbed through the skin, so bathing or showering in water containing lead is not considered a health risk. Consult with your healthcare provider for more details.

CAN MY PETS DRINK WATER WITH LEAD?

Lead can impact animals the same way it does humans. Domestic animals consume a relatively high volume of water relative to their body weight, so pet owners with lead in their home plumbing may want to take precautions and consider full replacement.

EXPLORE THE MANY AVAILABLE RESOURCES ON LEAD

[Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)

[American Water Works Association \(AWWA\)](#)

[AWWA Drink Tap Website](#)

[Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#)

[NH Department of Environmental Services \(NHDES\)](#)

[National Sanitation Foundation \(NSF\)](#)

[Lead Service Line Replacement Collaborative](#)



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WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE LEAD FROM MY DRINKING WATER?

The best way to remove the risk of lead in water is to completely replace all sources of lead. However, there are also steps you can take right away while you are in the process of assessing and establishing your replacement plan:

- **Run the Tap Before Use** – Lead levels are likely at their highest when water has been sitting in the pipe for several hours. Clear this water from your pipes by running the cold water for several minutes, allowing you to draw fresh water from the main. You can save this water for non-consumptive use such as watering houseplants.
- **Clean Aerators** – Aerators are small attachments at the tips of faucets that regulates the flow of water. If your home has a lead service line or plumbing, small pieces of lead can break off and get caught in the screen of the aerator. It's a good idea to remove your aerators at least monthly and clean them out.
- **Use Cold Water for Cooking** – Always cook and prepare food with cold water. Hot water dissolves lead more quickly, resulting in higher levels in your water.
- **Filter the Water** – Our mission is to provide safe, clean water that meets or exceeds all state and federal regulations. However, we cannot control what the water picks up when it travels through your service line and into your home or business's internal plumbing. Many home water filters are effective at removing lead, but not all are. If you purchase a filter, make sure it is certified for lead removal and that you maintain it properly.

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