

LEAD EXPOSURE FACT SHEET

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. Lead is stored in the bones and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the fetus receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development. 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.

SOURCES OF HUMAN EXPOSURE TO LEAD

There are many different sources of human exposure to lead. These include lead-based paint, lead-contaminated dust or soil, some plumbing materials, certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, food, and cosmetics, exposure in the work place and exposure from certain hobbies. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 10 to 20 percent of a person's potential exposure to lead may come from drinking water, while for an infant consuming formula mixed with lead-containing water this may increase to 40 to 60 percent.

HOW TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

- Run your water to flush out lead: If water hasn't been used for several hours, run water for 15 to 30 seconds or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature before using it for drinking or cooking.
- Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula: Lead from the plumbing dissolves more easily into hot water.

**Please note that boiling the water will not reduce lead levels.*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's website at www.epa.gov/lead. If you are concerned about exposure, contact your healthcare provider to learn how to have your child tested for lead.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Brian A. Mullikin, environmental team leader, Division of Sustainability and Compliance, at 240-740-2324 or via e-mail at Brian_A_Mullikin@mcpsmd.org.