

Lead in Tap Water and Preparing Infant Formula

Could my baby be at risk from lead in tap water?

Infants and young children are sensitive to lead exposure. It can affect how they learn and behave. Older homes may have lead in tap water. If you use formula mixed with tap water to feed your baby, this information will help protect your baby from lead exposure.

How do I know if there is lead in my tap water?

Older homes may have lead service lines, lead solder or plumbing fixtures which increase the risk of lead leaching into the tap water. **The older the home, the greater the risk.** The following information will help you identify if there may be lead in your tap water.

Lead can leach into tap water through:	
<p>High Risk: Lead service lines</p>	<p>Homes built before 1975 (when the national plumbing code was revised) are likely to have a lead service line, lead solder and plumbing fixtures. Newer homes built in older neighborhoods may still have the original lead service lines. If the line coming to your main water shut off valve is a greyish silver colour (not copper coloured) it may contain lead.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Lead pipe Copper pipe</p> </div> <p>For more information on lead in plumbing see: https://legacy.winnipeg.ca/waterandwaste/water/identifyingPipesFixtures.stm</p>
<p>Medium Risk: Lead solder</p>	<p>Homes built between 1975 and 1990 may have lead plumbing fixtures and solder. Flushing the cold-water tap should reduce lead levels.</p>
<p>Lower Risk: Fixtures, taps, valves, fittings</p>	<p>Homes built after 1990, especially those built before 2014, may have brass fixtures that contain lead. Flushing the cold-water tap should reduce lead levels.</p>

Your municipal water supplier may have about information on levels of lead in drinking water, lead service lines and how to replace them on their website: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/lead/index.html> . In Winnipeg, visit: <https://legacy.winnipeg.ca/waterandwaste/water/lead.stm> or call 311. For information on testing your water for lead, contact your local water supplier to see if testing is offered in your community or visit: https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/pubs/water/drinking_water/rld_homechildcare.pdf.

How do I prepare formula for my baby if there is lead in my tap water?

If you live in a high-risk home, to prepare formula use:

- Bottled water
- [Ready-to-feed formula](#)
- Water filtered at the tap or a pitcher with a filter that meets the NSF/ANSI standard for reducing lead levels.

- It is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions on how often to change the filters to make sure they reduce the lead level. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/infographic-finding-drinking-water-filter.html>

If you are still deciding how to feed your baby, [consider breastfeeding](#). If you are “mixed feeding”, consider breastfeeding more.

If you cannot use these options to feed your baby, flushing your water lines may help to reduce lead levels in your tap water depending on where you live.

Flushing Your Water:

- Do not use water that has been sitting in the plumbing system for several hours for cooking, drinking or making formula.
- Before using, flush your water line by letting the cold-water tap run for about 5 minutes, depending on where you live (*check with your water supplier about how long you need to run the water to help reduce lead levels).
- You can also flush your water line by:
 - Showering or doing laundry
 - Then running the cold-water tap until the water is cold
- Once your water line is flushed and the tap water is cold, fill a pot with water and boil it for two minutes to sterilize it. This water can be stored in a covered, sterile container at room temperature for 24 hours or in the fridge for 2-3 days. You can now use it to prepare formula.

If you live in a medium or lower risk home:

- Flush your tap water as described above.

Regardless of the type of water you use:

- Boil the water for two minutes before using it to [prepare formula](#).
- Always use water from the cold-water tap for drinking or cooking.
- **DO NOT** use discoloured tap water.
- Every 6 months clean the screen on faucets used for drinking and cooking. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/infographic-cleaning-faucet-aerators.html>

To find out more about lead in tap water:

- Visit Manitoba's Be Lead Aware website: manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/lead/
- Call Health Links/Info Santé: **(204)788-8200 or toll free at 1-888-315-9257**
- Speak to your Public Health office or health care provider

References:

- [Lead in Drinking Water: Information for Manitoba Homeowners and Home-based Child Care Providers](#)
- [Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality: Guideline Technical Document – Lead](#)
- [Formula Feeding Your Baby \(gov.mb.ca\)](http://gov.mb.ca)
- [Breastfeeding Your Baby \(gov.mb.ca\)](http://gov.mb.ca)