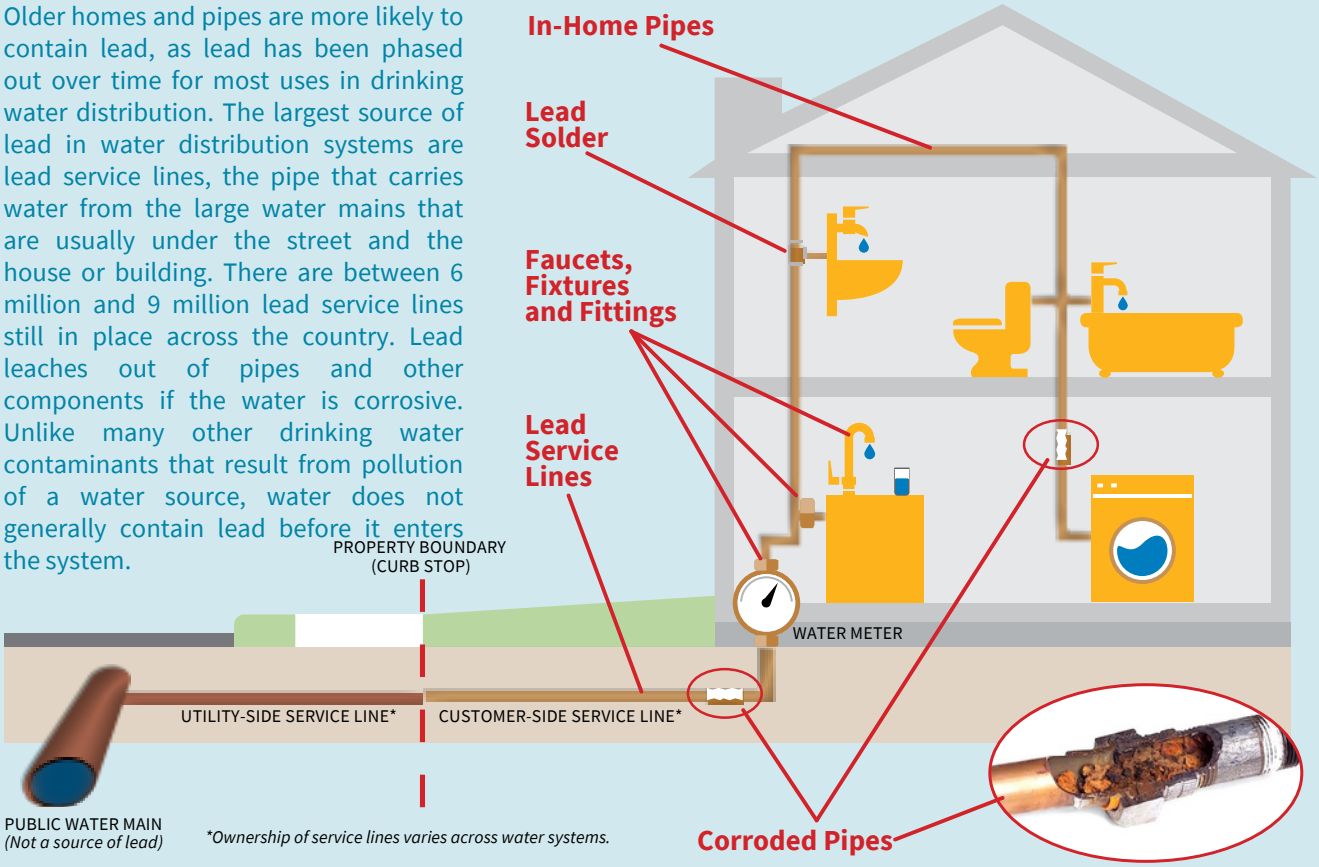
How Lead Gets Into Drinking Water

Older homes and pipes are more likely to contain lead, as lead has been phased out over time for most uses in drinking water distribution. The largest source of lead in water distribution systems are lead service lines, the pipe that carries water from the large water mains that are usually under the street and the house or building. There are between 6 million and 9 million lead service lines still in place across the country. Lead leaches out of pipes and other components if the water is corrosive. Unlike many other drinking water contaminants that result from pollution of a water source, water does not generally contain lead before it enters the system.



Protect Yourself from Lead in Drinking Water

- Learn about lead levels in your community. Every year, public water systems prepare a Consumer Confidence Report (CCR), which includes information on lead monitoring results. For more information and help finding your CCR: https://www.epa.gov/ccr. Water systems also post lead monitoring results online.
- Run your water before drinking or cooking. The longer water sits in pipes, the more lead it may contain. When water has not been used for 6 hours or more, running water 1–3 minutes until it becomes cold can help ensure you are not using water that has been sitting in the pipes. This water can be used for watering plants or other non-consumption uses.
- Have your water tested. If you are concerned about lead in your tap water you can test for lead and other contaminants. Some water systems will provide lead testing for their customers. Others will provide information on local laboratories and other resources. There are low cost tests available. Call your water system to see if testing is available.
- Use cold water for drinking and eating. Cold water is less likely to contain lead. Never add warm water to baby formula. Boiling water will not remove lead.
- Choose the right filter. Only specific products are designed to reduce lead contamination. If you choose to use filters, consult your water system and learn more about products: http://bit.ly/NSFlead

for more information on lead in drinking water, go to: cleanwater.org/lead

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