



LEAD-SAFE CHICAGO | DWM

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LEAD IN CHICAGO

What is the major source of lead poisoning in Chicago?

In Chicago, lead-based paint and lead contaminated dust are the most dangerous sources of lead and contribute more to lead poisoning than water. Through a focus on removing lead-based paint and dust hazards, Chicago has achieved significant success in reducing the percentage of children with high blood lead levels- from 25% in the late 1990s to less than 1% today. When old paint cracks and peels, it makes lead dust, which is too small to be seen. Children may get lead poisoning from swallowing or breathing in lead dust on their hands and toys. Lead can also be found in soil, pots, containers, imported food such as candy or spices, folk medicine, cosmetics made in other countries, and some toys and jewelry. For more information visit Chicago.gov/Lead



What are the health effects of ingesting lead?



High levels of lead in the blood, or lead poisoning, can affect growth behavior and development in young children. Increased blood lead levels have been shown to affect IQ, the ability to pay attention, and academic achievement. The vast majority of children in Chicago with high blood lead levels have been exposed to lead based paint.

Who is most at risk of lead poisoning in Chicago?

Children who live in older, poorly maintained rental properties. Young children are at highest risk because their brains are developing rapidly and because they are more likely to put their hands and objects contaminated with lead dust into their mouths. The EPA estimates that, on average, drinking water can make up to 20% of a person's exposure to lead, with other sources including lead-based paint, dust, soil, imported foods, and folk medicine. In infants who are only being fed formula mixed with tap water, 40-60% of exposure could be due to water.



Talk to your pediatrician about having your child tested for lead exposure: Every child in Chicago should have their blood lead levels tested at 1, 2, and 3 years of age by their healthcare provider.

Is Chicago's water safe?



Yes, Chicago's drinking water is safe. It consistently meets and exceed all industry, state and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards for safe, clean drinking water.

How does lead get into drinking water?

There is no lead in the water when it leaves the treatment plant. When lead is found in water it is usually because it has leached into the system from lead service lines. Service lines are the pipes that carry the water from the water main under the street into your house. Lead service lines were used in smaller buildings such as single family and two flat homes in Chicago until 1986. The Chicago Department of Water Management (DWM) adds corrosion control to the water to coat the pipes and minimize leaching of lead into the water and this works well for the vast majority of residences. However, in some cases, particularly where there is low water use and the coating dissolves, lead can leach into the water.



DWM has begun a multi-year, multi-faceted program to remove lead service lines. Visit LeadSafeChicago.org for information on the various options.

How do I know if I have a lead service line?

If your home was built before 1986 and is a smaller residence such as a single family or two flat residence, there is a high likelihood that your service line is lead. The larger the building the less likely it is to have a lead service line. You can look up your address on Chicago's lead service line inventory to see what your water service line is made of at sli.ChicagoWaterQuality.org.

Can I use water that contains lead?



Lead in water is not absorbed through the skin, so you can bathe and shower even if you are told that your water has high lead levels. Use only cold water for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula, as hot water is more likely to contain lead. Boiling water does not remove lead from water.

How can I help keep my water safe?

- Test your water for lead: **Call 311** or visit ChicagoWaterQuality.org to request a completely free water lead testing kit or to have a Department of Water Management (DWM) representative come to your home to collect water samples. You will be notified of your results, and if water levels exceed the EPA action level, DWM will visit your home to try to find the cause and create a mitigation plan.
- Flush your water: If you haven't used your water for 6 hours or more flush your water system. This can be done by running the tap for a minimum of 5 minutes. Performing chores such as taking a shower, washing the dishes, flushing the toilet, or doing laundry count as flushing the water as well.
- Regularly clean your faucet's aerator or screen.
- Consider replacing your service line. DWM is offering several types of free replacement programs that replace the entire service line from the water main to the home.

Is Chicago replacing lead service lines?

Yes, Chicago has several lead service line replacement (LSLR) programs.

Voluntary Lead Service Line Replacement Programs:

1. Equity Lead Service Line Replacement Program
 - **FREE** replacements for income-qualified residents who own the home they live in
2. Homeowner-Initiated Replacement Program
 - Waive up to \$5,000 in permit fees if a homeowner wants to replace a lead service line
3. Daycare Lead Service Line Replacement Program
 - **FREE** lead service line replacement (LSLR) for licensed daycares in low-income areas

Mandatory Lead Service Line Replacement Programs:

- Breaks and Leaks Replacement Program
 - Call 311 to report a service line break or leak and DWM will replace the entire lead service line for **FREE**
- Water and Sewer Main Replacement Program
 - **FREE** residential LSLR when DWM performs scheduled water or sewer main replacements.

To learn more about these programs, scan this QR Code or visit:
www.LeadSafeChicago.org/lead-service-line-replacement



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