

fact sheet



Lead Pipes

Lead in drinking water is not usually a problem in our area as the hard water in the area tends to produce a protective layer of limescale between the water and the pipes.

When the water leaves the treatment works it contains virtually no lead. However, if you have a lead service pipe or internal plumbing, small amounts of lead may dissolve in the water when passing.

In properties built before the late 1970s lead pipes were often used to bring water from the mains in the street into the property. If your property is built after the late 1970s or has been modernised since then the connecting pipes will probably be made of copper or plastic. When dissolved in drinking water lead has been identified as harmful to health particularly for young children and pregnant mothers.

Regulatory lead limits

The UK standard for the concentration of lead in drinking water is a maximum of 25 parts per billion (ug/l). This applies to cold drinking water drawn from the tap. Although these levels are safe, the Department of Health advises that action should be taken to reduce levels further, particularly if you are pregnant or have young children.

The water company (Thames Water in this area) monitor lead levels regularly by taking samples from randomly selected customers' properties and all readings above 25ug/l are declared to any customers who may be affected and the Environmental Health Department.

How to check for lead pipes

Inside your home

Check the pipe leading to the internal stop valve (this is usually under the kitchen sink). Lead pipes are dark grey (underneath any paint), soft and easily marked.

Outside your home

Open the flap of the stop valve and examine the pipe running towards your property. If you can, scrape its surface gently with a knife to reveal the pipe, which if lead, will be dark grey in colour.

If you are considering replacing lead pipes or need more information please contact Thames Water utilities 0845 9200 800

www.thameswater.co.uk/lead