

Important information about lead pipes

The City of Toronto's Water Service Replacement Program

Replacing lead pipes is the most effective way to get the lead out of drinking water. With more than 65,000 City-owned lead water services to replace, City Council in July 2007 approved an aggressive nine-year, \$226 million program for replacement. The program is one of the most ambitious lead water service replacement programs in North America.

Which homes will have the City-owned portion of the water services replaced?

All homes within the construction area noted in the attached letter and determined to have a substandard water service will have the City-owned portion of the water service replaced, at no cost to the homeowner. **Important note:** If your water service is being replaced due to low pressure or flow rate, you will not get the full benefit of the replacement unless both portions of the water service are replaced.

Advice to homeowners

How will I know if the City-owned portion of the water service will be replaced?

The City contractor will confirm if the City-owned portion of your water service is substandard and needs to be replaced when construction begins. However, you should begin preparation for the possible replacement of the private portion of a lead water service now.

How do I know if the private side of my water service is lead?

If your home was built before the mid-1950s and your water service has never been replaced, it is quite possible that your water service is made of lead. A plumber or home inspector can confirm this for you. If your water service is made of lead, the City of Toronto strongly encourages you to replace your portion of the lead water service – replacing the entire water service is the only way to ensure your drinking water does not come into contact with lead pipes while traveling into your home.

What steps should I take to replace my portion of the water service?

- The City of Toronto recommends you get quotes from at least three licensed contractors before deciding which company to hire (check the Yellow Pages under “Contractors, plumbing” or contact your local Better Business Bureau office). Replacing the private portion of the water service can cost approximately \$1,500 to \$3,000 depending on your property size and other on-site factors.
- You may also contact the City-hired contractor (listed above) to get an estimate of the cost to replace the private portion of the lead water service.
- There'll be no cost for requesting an estimate and you will not be obligated to hire the same contractor as the City. (In some cases, due to a large workload, the City-hired contractor may not be able to include the private portion of the water service as part of the replacement work on your street. You should confirm this with the contractor ahead of time. If that is the case, you will need to hire your own contractor.)

- If you hire your own contractor, the replacement of the private portion of your water service must be done before or after the City-hired contractor replaces the City-owned side. Your private contractor cannot work at the site at the same time as the City's contractor.
- You are responsible for any contract you engage in.

Potential health impacts of lead in drinking water

Who is most at risk from lead in drinking water?

Toronto Public Health advises that lead in drinking water can have negative health impacts on children under the age of six years as well as pregnant women or nursing mothers (who can pass lead onto the child). For more information about the health impacts of lead in drinking water visit www.toronto.ca/health or call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600.

Do I need to replace the private portion of my lead water service?

Lead in drinking water can have negative health impacts on the at-risk people in your home (see previous question for who is at risk). Replacing the water service is the only way to ensure your drinking water does not come into contact with lead pipes while traveling into your home. If your water service is made of lead, Toronto Public Health strongly encourages you to replace your portion of the lead water service.

What steps should I take to help prevent lead in my drinking water?

If you live in a home with a lead water service you should use standard flushing practices. Flushing is simply running your tap until the water is cold to the touch and then for one minute after; this should be done before using the water for cooking or drinking. If you have children under the age of six, a pregnant woman or nursing mother in your home, you should install a NSF-53 certified lead filter and continue to use that filter until the entire lead water service (both the City-owned portion and the private portion) is replaced.

Is my drinking water free of lead once the water service is replaced?

After lead water service replacement, lead levels may temporarily increase. You must immediately take the following steps after the water service replacement work is completed to limit exposure to lead in your drinking water:

- Flush the new water service by running the cold water tap for 15 minutes from the lowest tap in your home (typically the basement) to remove any loose particles.
- Do not open a hot water faucet until the system is flushed or you may introduce sediment into your hot water heater.
- Thoroughly rinse all faucet aerators in your home to remove any particles that may be trapped.
- Toronto Public Health advises that homes with children under the age of six, a pregnant woman or nursing mother, continue using an NSF-53 certified filter for approximately three months after the lead water service is replaced.

After taking these immediate steps it is recommended that, for several months after replacement, you flush water from your faucets for several minutes before using it for cooking and drinking; and that you regularly check and rinse the faucet aerators to remove any trapped particles.

More information: Visit www.toronto.ca/water/lead for more information about lead in drinking water, flushing practices, the City's Faucet Filter Rebate Program, and a current schedule of the Water Service Replacement Program, or call 311.