



Lead pipes and drinking water

Toronto's drinking water source, Lake Ontario, is lead-free. Toronto's four water treatment plants are constructed from lead-free materials, as are all elements of the distribution system including pumps, reservoirs and pipes (watermains). Your drinking water is delivered with no detectable lead.

Water service connections (the pipe connecting an individual home to the City's water supply system, see diagram below) may be made from lead. Lead was a common building material in the first half of the 1900s when many homes in Toronto were built. In the mid-1950s the Ontario plumbing code was changed to prohibit the use of lead pipes for water service connections.

Apartment buildings and other multi-residential buildings do not have lead water service connections, regardless of age.

Toronto has almost 500,000 water service connections – in 2007 approximately 65,000 were assumed to be made from lead. For homes was built before the mid-1950s, Toronto Water assumes the pipe is lead, unless it has been upgraded.

In July 2007, City Council approved the Lead Pipe Replacement Program to remove all lead water service connections. Through this program, the City will replace the City-owned side of the water service connection – the portion of pipe running from the watermain to the property line (see diagram). Approximately 6,000 replacements were completed in 2008 and another 7,000 to 8,000 are scheduled for replacement in 2009. Residents with a lead test result above 10 parts per billion (ppb) will have their pipe changed out on a priority basis.

The homeowner is responsible for replacing the private side of the water service connection – the portion of the pipe running from the property line to the water meter. Changing out this portion of pipe can cost approximately \$1800 to \$3000. Residents can use the City's contractor for this work or hire their own contractor.

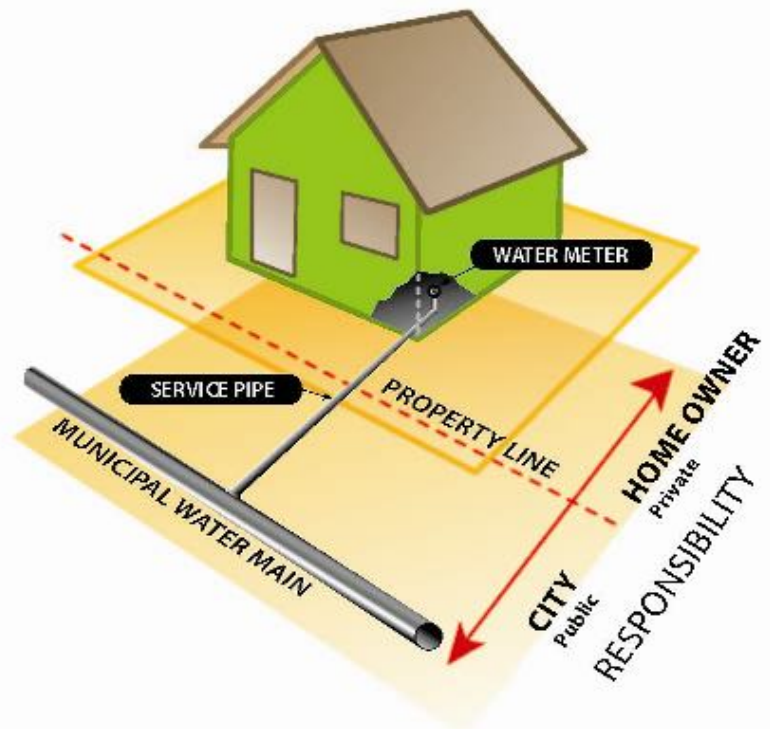


Illustration courtesy of the City of London

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If you live in a home built before the mid-1950s and your water service connection has not been upgraded, you can have your water tested for lead. You can pick-up a test kit and instructions at one of the Toronto Public Health offices listed below. (Samples must also be returned to a Toronto Public Health office.) The Toronto Water Laboratory will contact you with your test results.

If your test shows lead levels above 10 ppb (the limit set by the Ministry of the Environment), you will be placed on a priority list to have the City-owned portion of the pipe changed. To fully eliminate the risk of lead in drinking water, the private portion of the pipe must be changed also. Until both portions of the pipe are replaced, you should flush your taps before drawing water for drinking or cooking. Running the cold water tap until the water is cold and then for one full minute after, will flush any standing water out of the pipes. This should be done anytime you haven't used water for a long period of time (e.g. overnight).

If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, or if you have a child under the age of six in your home, you should use a filter, certified by the National Sanitation Foundation to remove lead, until your pipes have been changed. Look for the NSF-53 mark on the label.

For more information about the public health risks associated with lead in drinking water contact Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600 or visit www.toronto.ca/health. For more information about the Lead Pipe Replacement Program or lead testing visit www.toronto.ca/water.

Toronto Public Health Offices

Lead test kits are available at reception. You can call the Toronto Water Laboratory at 416-392-2894 to pre-register for your test.

West Region

- Etobicoke Civic Centre – 399 The West Mall, 4th floor

North Region

- North York Civic Centre – 5100 Yonge Street, 2nd floor

East Region

- 1530 Markham Road, 5th floor

South Region

- 2340 Dundas Street West, main floor
- 44 Victoria Street, 18th Floor
- East York Civic Centre – 850 Coxwell Avenue, main floor

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