

Lead in Drinking Water

The City of Toronto is sending you two notices to tell you about construction the City will be doing near your home soon. The first one is called a "Pre-Construction Notice" and it is sent about 3 months before the work begins. The second one is called a "Construction Notice" and it is sent 1-4 weeks before the work begins. You should have one of these notices in your mailbox today.

The construction could involve work on your road, watermain or sewer. **It may also involve replacing the City-owned part of your water service pipe, which may contain lead.**

Lead can affect how the brain and nervous system grows, so this factsheet is very important to read if someone in your house is pregnant, if there are children under 6 years old, or if there is an infant drinking formula made from tap water.

Water Pipe Replacement



The underground pipe that brings water to your water meter (called the service pipe) is owned by you and by the City. The part that the City owns goes from the municipal watermain to your property line. The part that you own goes from your property line to your water meter.

During construction, if the City finds that the water pipe is made of lead, it will replace the City-owned part. **Toronto Public Health strongly recommends you replace your part of the water pipe if it contains lead.** With only a partial lead pipe replacement, there may be a temporary increase of lead in your drinking water. The best way to reduce lead is to replace both the City-owned and private side of a lead water pipe. Find out how by reading the back of this Fact Sheet.

Lead, Drinking Water and Your Health

- If you live in a property (storefront, office building or house) built before the mid-1950s and the water service pipe has never been replaced, it is probably made of lead. If it is, then lead may be getting into your drinking water. Apartment and other buildings with more than six units do not have lead pipes.
- Lead is most harmful to the growing brain and nervous system of a fetus, infant or child under 6 years old. If a young child has too much lead in their body, it can lead to a shortened attention span, and intellectual and behavioural problems.
- If you have a baby at home and are breastfeeding, continue to breastfeed your baby. The amount of lead in breast milk is much lower than in tap water



and is healthy for your baby to drink. If you are feeding your baby formula, use cold filtered tap water, boil it and then let it cool. Use within 30 minutes. Until you have a filter, consider using bottled water for making baby formula, or ready-to-feed formula.

How to prepare for lead water pipe replacement

Once construction begins, the contractor will be able to see the underground water pipe and will know for sure if the City-owned portion is made of lead and needs to be replaced. A City staff person or City-hired contractor will tell you in person or leave a note in your mailbox if they are replacing the service to your property. In the meantime, you can take steps to prepare for the possible replacement.

Step 1: Find out if your part of the water pipe is made of lead.

- If your house was built before the mid-1950s, then the water service pipe is probably made of lead, unless it was replaced at another time. You can find out how old your house is by asking the landlord or checking the ownership papers.
- If possible, look at the pipe that goes into your water meter. If it is grey, scratches easily and does not sound hollow when you tap it, it may be made of lead. To know for sure, ask a plumber or home inspector.

Step 2: Find a contractor to replace your part of the water pipe.

- Get at least three quotes from a licensed plumber to get the best price. Replacing your part of the water pipe could cost approximately \$3,000 but will be dependent on the characteristics of your home.
- If you received a "Construction Notice" in your mailbox today, this means that the City will be doing the work in 1-4 weeks and has hired its own contractor. You can ask them for a quote. Look for their name and phone number in the Notice. Sometimes, the City-hired contractor may not be able to do the work for you due to their schedule. This is why it is good for you to get quotes from other contractors before work starts.
- If you hire your own contractor, they must replace your part of the water pipe either before or after the City-hired contractor replaces the City-owned part. Private contractors cannot work at the site at the same time as the City-hired contractor. Be sure that your contractor understands this and can tell you the best way for coordinating the work to save you the most money.

Step 3: Learn more about protecting your health after a lead water pipe is replaced

- After a lead water pipe is replaced, there may be a temporary increase of lead in your drinking water. The City will provide you with tips and a free water filter to help reduce the health impact from any temporary lead increase.

To learn more about lead pipe replacement and other ways that the City of Toronto is working to reduce lead in drinking water, visit toronto.ca/lead or call 311.