

Facts on - Lead in drinking water



Lead in drinking water

The water we supply is virtually lead free. However, it can sometimes get into your water as it passes through lead plumbing inside your home, or from a lead pipe that connects your home to our water pipe.

There are strict regulations concerning the amount of lead allowed in drinking water. The current drinking water standard is no more than 10 micrograms per litre (parts per billion).

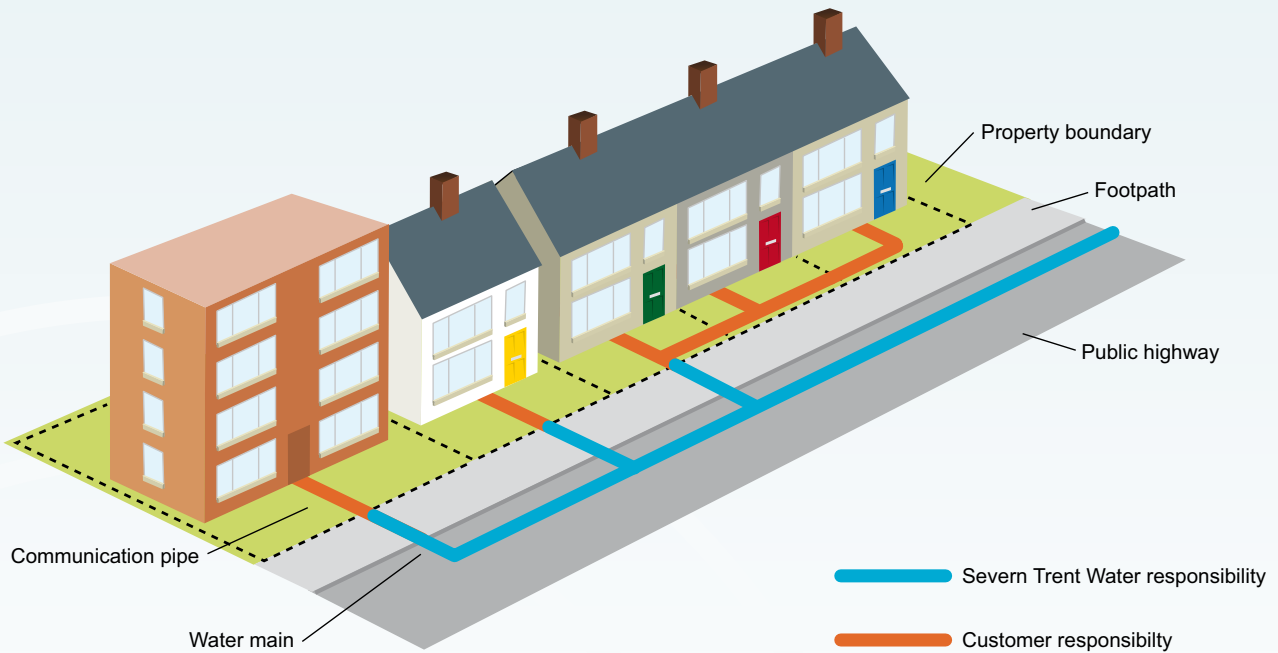
The Department of Health advises that lead can be harmful if levels are allowed to build up in the body. Therefore, it makes sense to try and reduce the amount as much as possible, particularly if you are pregnant or have young children.

For further health advice please contact your GP or call the NHS on 111.



How do I know which pipe I am responsible for?

In most cases, we own and look after the water pipe in the street and footpath up to the boundary of your property; all other pipes and fittings are your responsibility. Please see the diagram below.



How can I tell if I have lead pipes?

If your property was built before 1970 you may have lead pipes, but newer houses usually don't.

Here is a quick way you can check to see if your pipes are lead:

- First find the point where the water service pipe enters your property – it's usually in the kitchen, possibly under the sink, or in a downstairs toilet or cupboard. Unpainted lead pipes are a dull grey colour and if scraped with a coin you will see a shiny, silver-coloured metal underneath.

Other pipe materials in common use are:

- Copper – bright, hard and dull brown
- Iron – dark, very hard and may be rusty
- Plastic – which comes in a range of colours.

What is Severn Trent Water doing about lead?

We're always working to reduce the levels of lead in drinking water across our region. Soft water can dissolve lead from service pipes, so we treat it before it comes to you to help reduce its ability to do this.

Of thousands of samples we test for lead, very few exceed the 10 micrograms per litre standard set by the World Health Organisation.

How can I find out if there is lead in my water?

If you discover that you have a lead pipe bring water into your home, we're happy to come out and test the water for you. Please contact us on **0800 783 4444** to arrange this.

For general information about water quality in your area visit our website stwater.co.uk/waterquality – just use our simple postcode search to find out more.

How can I reduce lead in my water?

Follow these simple steps to help reduce levels in your water:

- Flushing – don't drink water that has been standing in the pipes for long periods. Run the cold water tap first thing in the morning or when you get home from work for at least two minutes. Alternatively, flushing the toilet or taking a shower draws fresh water through the pipes. Don't forget this water is perfectly fine to collect in a bowl and you can use it to water your indoor plants or on your garden. Flushing your taps is a sensible protective measure but it's not a long term solution.
- Only use water from the cold water tap in the kitchen for cooking, drinking and when making up baby formula – this is usually the one that brings water direct from the mains pipe. Never use the hot water tap as warm water increases the amount of lead absorbed from your pipes.
- Water filters - as a short-term measure, some water filters can remove traces of lead. You'll need to check the instructions carefully to make sure that the filter is designed to remove lead.
- Replace any lead piping - the best way to get rid of lead completely is to replace your lead pipes. You'll need to get a quote from a reputable plumber to find out how much it will cost you to do this – a list of approved 'WaterSafe' plumbers is available on our website stwater.co.uk/watersafe. If you decide to replace your part of the pipe, we'll replace our bit free of charge. We will also connect your new supply pipe to our water pipe when you have finished your work. You can apply on our website for the lead pipe replacement scheme stwater.co.uk/lead.

Please remember that some properties may share a lead service pipe with neighbours. If this is the case, you'll need their permission before carrying out the work. To find out more please contact us on **0800 783 4444**.