

A photograph of a man with glasses and a white t-shirt washing his hands at a kitchen sink. A young boy is standing next to him, looking on. The kitchen is bright and modern, with a white countertop and a stainless steel sink. There are various kitchen items on the counter, including a bowl of batter and an egg carton.

# A Customer Guide to Replacing Lead Pipes

## Our Customer Guide

We have created this guide to provide you with support and guidance if you are concerned about having lead pipes and/or considering getting your pipes replaced. We will outline our responsibility before, during and after your lead pipes are replaced.

## When does this guide not apply?

This guide does not apply to any property that is being substantially altered from their original use.

For information please visit our Scheme of Charges

<https://www.stwater.co.uk/content/dam/stw/my-account/our-charges/england-hh-chargesscheme2019.pdf>.

Any property being substantially altered properties will need to make an application by speaking with our new connections team or visiting our [website](#).

If, after work begins, we find that a property is being, or has been, **substantially altered** from its **original form** and we have not been made aware of this (e.g. a large house being changed into multiple dwellings), you may **incur subsequent costs** as a result. Should this happen we would advise you of any accrued costs to date and to stop any further work before more costs are accumulated and further work is agreed.

## Why should I change my lead pipes?

If your house was built before 1970 there's a chance your property will have lead pipes. It has been found that lead can seep in and contaminate your drinking water which over a long period of time can be harmful. It is the responsibility of the homeowner to replace their lead pipes. Whilst it is not a legal requirement to have your lead pipes replaced we want to make sure everyone in our region is using safe and modern pipes.

## How do I check if my pipes are lead?

To check if you have lead pipes, you will need to:

- 1) Find where the mains water pipe enters your property (it's usually under your kitchen sink, in the downstairs toilet or under the stairs).
- 2) Scrape the pipe gently with a coin. If you see a shiny, silver-coloured metal underneath it potentially could be a lead pipe.

It is important to note that if the metal is shiny it does not necessarily mean that it is lead – it could be galvanised iron. This can be verified by using a magnet, as a magnet will not attract lead.

Scratching lead pipes can sometimes produce small amounts of lead dust. Lead dust can be harmful if breathed in, so please use gloves, a face mask and eye protection if you carry out this pipe test.

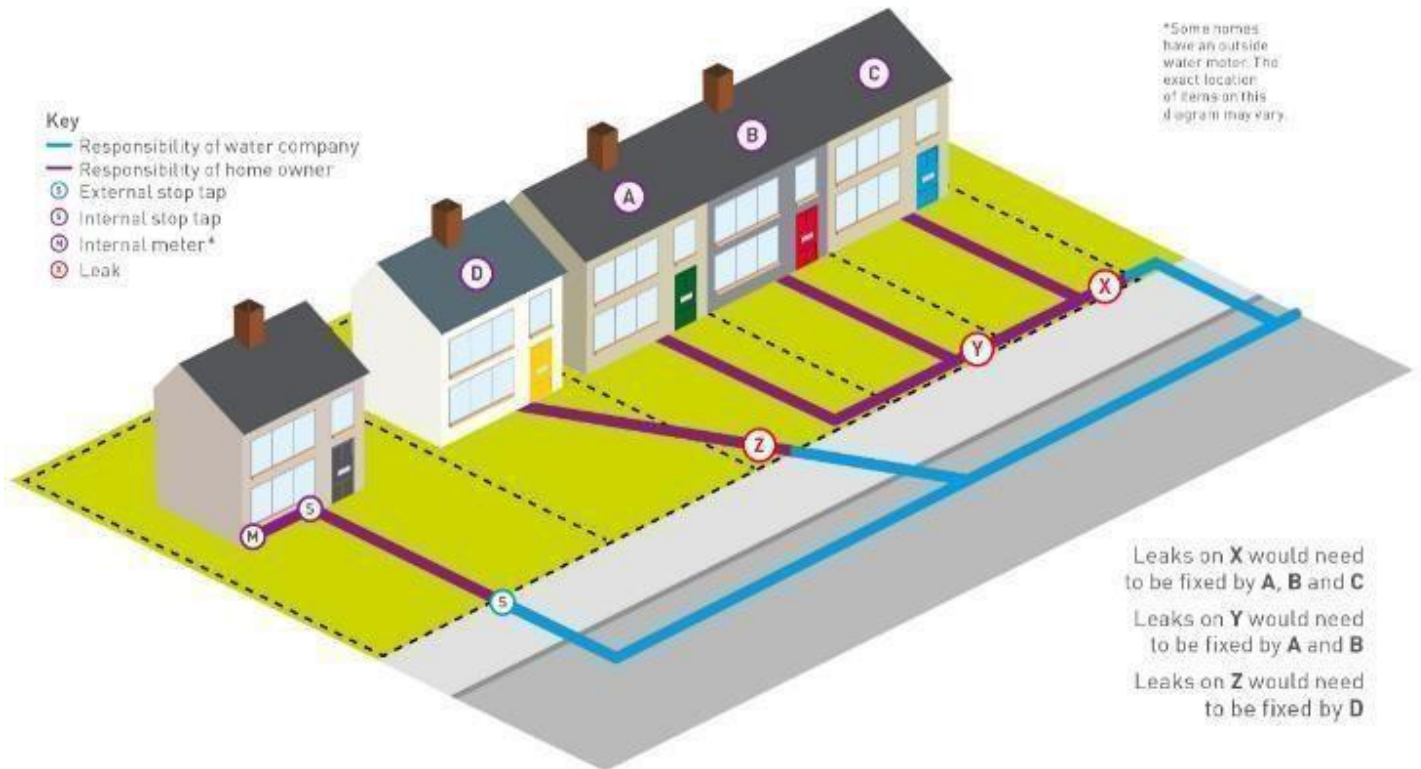
## How do I reduce lead in my drinking water?

The only way to completely remove lead from your water is to have your lead pipes replaced. Until you are able to get your pipes replaced, below are a few ways to mitigate the effects of lead in your water.

1. When you wake up in the morning, **run the cold tap** in the kitchen to flush out any water that has been standing in the pipes overnight. You can always use this water for your plants.
2. **Flush the toilet** this will also clear any water that has been standing in the pipes overnight.
3. **Try not to disturb** or knock lead pipes as this can increase the lead in your water.
4. The best way to rid your home of lead is to **replace your lead water pipes**, including your underground supply pipe.

## What pipes belong to me or the water supplier?

Once a supply pipe crosses a highway boundary, it then becomes the responsibility of the home owner. Whether that's onto the owner's property or third party land. If you are looking to replace your lead pipes you will be required to change the pipes you are responsible for. We will then replace our lead pipes.



## I have decided to replace my lead pipes, what should I do now?

To get the application process started please contact our dedicated team, they are on hand between 8am - 10pm Monday to Friday, 8am – 4pm on Saturday and 8am – 3.30pm on Sunday. You can contact the team on **0800 917 2477** or send an email to [vftenquiries@severntrent.co.uk](mailto:vftenquiries@severntrent.co.uk) and someone will be in touch.



## What happens next?

### Step 1 – Contact and Guidance

Our dedicated team will guide you through the process from start to finish. They will offer to video call you to help determine whether you would benefit from the lead replacement scheme. During this call they will ask to see your pipes so they can confirm they are lead. They will also ask questions such as the age of the property, who the bill payer is and whether you are on a single or shared supply. Once we have confirmed your pipes are lead we will send you some information about next steps and what you will need to do before we can get started.

If you cannot complete a video call, or we have further queries we will organise someone to come and have a look at the earliest opportunity. However, this may delay the process in getting your pipes replaced.

### Step 2 – Choosing your plumber

**Throughout steps 2 and 3 you will continue to be fed by your existing supply (you should not disconnect from this until the new supply is connected). It will only be when we do our connection that you will be temporarily without water. For more questions about this please contact our specialist team on 0800 917 2477 and they can support you with any queries you may have.**

During the initial assessment our video call team will advise whether you are on a shared or single supply this will affect which plumber you can employ to do the work for you. Should you be on a shared supply you will be required to use an approved plumber who is a member of the following approval boards:

- Severn Trent Approved Plumbers Scheme – WaterMark <https://www.stwater.co.uk/in-my-area/find-a-plumber/>
- Water Industry Approved Plumbers Scheme - WIAPS [https://www.wras.co.uk/consumers/approved\\_plumber\\_scheme/](https://www.wras.co.uk/consumers/approved_plumber_scheme/)
- Thames Water Approved Plumbers Scheme - TAPS <https://www.trustatrader.com/trade-associations/thames-water-approved-plumbing-scheme>
- Anglian Water Approved Plumbers Scheme - APlus <https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/developers/water-services/approved-plumbers/aplus-approved-plumbers/>

If you are on a single supply you can use any plumber of your choosing. However, we would still advise you to use an approved plumber from one of the above boards.

Your plumber will then be required to install the pipework within your boundary. All pipework should comply with the current Water Supply Regulations 1999.

Once this work is completed by your plumber call us on **0800 917 2477**, we will want to carry out a video call with you to confirm all work is complete. If video call is not an option we will send someone out to complete this inspection.

**From Step 3 it can take up to 90 days for completion.**

### **Step 3 – Connection**

When we replace our pipes and reconnect your pipes to the mains it could mean we have to shut your road. If we do need to shut the road it can take 90 days to receive permission from the council. However if road closure is not required we will aim to be out with you within 21 days. If there are any issues we will keep you updated.

### **Step 4 – Disconnection**

If you're on your own supply (single supply) we'll disconnect your old supply when we complete the new connection. However please always instruct your plumber to complete your internal pipe work connection and reconnection.

If you are on a shared or common supply, your plumber will need to complete the disconnection from the shared supply where it joins to the shared section of the main supply pipe. A certificate of the work will be required from your plumber and we will instruct them to send this information to our dedicated lead replacement team, within 5 days of job completion, they can do this by emailing the certificate to [vftenquiries@severntrent.co.uk](mailto:vftenquiries@severntrent.co.uk).

### **Step 5 – Getting back to normal**

Once the reconnection to the network, is complete, we'll be back within 3 working days to patch up any holes and clear barriers from site (please note that this is **working** days).

### **Should I tell my neighbours that I am getting my lead pipes replaced?**

We would always support telling your neighbours about having any works done on your water and sewerage pipes. Most of our network is made up of homes on shared supplies – this means what you do to your water pipes may affect others in your street.

If you are on a shared supply, your plumber is responsible for giving your neighbours information about what the process is and the potential impact it could have on their water quality and pressure.

### **How can Severn Trent provide me/ my family with long term support?**

We understand that sometimes you/ your family need long term support. We are able to offer you tailored support by assigning you to our Priority Services Register (PSR) <https://www.stwater.co.uk/get-in-touch/join-our-priority-services-register/>. This is a free service and means we can learn a bit more about you and help us understand your specific needs. Our PSR is here to support all, whether you/ your family member are facing ill-health, financial worries, language barriers or physical/ psychological ill-health. We are here to try and provide some support to you and your family during that period.

### **I have more questions about information in this guide, where should I go?**

If you have further questions about the above agenda, please contact us <https://www.stwater.co.uk/help-and-contact/contact-us/> and someone will be able to support you with your query.