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## Lead and keeping your drinking water safe

Lead in drinking water has become a widely discussed issue across the nation following the 2016 water crisis in Flint, Michigan. Mifflin County Municipal Authority (MCMA) has several provisions in place for testing for lead in our water and keeping it safe for all customers. Still, there are a number of things that you can do to make sure that lead is not an issue in your home. The most important thing is being informed and taking action if you might have a problem with lead.

### What is lead and where is it found?

Lead is a metal that is found naturally all over the world. It can be toxic to humans and animals if it is swallowed or inhaled. Lead can be found in many parts of our environment—air, soil, water, and even inside our homes. In water, it is colorless and odorless. Lead and lead compounds have been used in a wide variety of products, including paint, ceramics, pipes and plumbing materials, gasoline, batteries, and cosmetics. As we've learned more about the dangers of lead, fewer and fewer products with lead in them are being made today.

### What is lead poisoning?

Lead is harmful to everyone. Pregnant women and their unborn babies, infants and children under the age of six and adults with high blood pressure and kidney problems are at the most risk. Lead poisoning is a medical condition where lead, a heavy metal, builds up in the body. It can occur in adults, but is typically a greater problem among children. It can result in a number of conditions:

- Developmental delays
- Learning difficulties
- Irritability
- Loss of energy
- Weight loss
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Lack of appetite
- Constipation
- Hearing loss

### Where does MCMA's drinking water come from and how is it tested?

The drinking water from MCMA's water sources, Laurel Creek Reservoir and three wells, are naturally lead free. However, if homes and buildings have lead water pipes or plumbing containing lead, there is a risk for having lead get into the water. This is important for customers to understand, because you might need to take action to reduce the risk of lead exposure. Currently, MCMA tests for lead in tap water every three years at 30 representative taps of homes across Mifflin County. The testing is done according to the Environmental Protection Agency's Lead and Copper Rule. >>

The testing results are used to determine if our water continues to be noncorrosive, so that water has minimum potential for lead to leach from your home's plumbing. So far, our test results show that the non-corrosive properties of MCMA's water is working to keep lead levels to a minimum. The results can be found on our website [www.mifflincountyh2o.com/water-quality/](http://www.mifflincountyh2o.com/water-quality/)

## How do I know if I have a problem in my home?

The risk of lead exposure will vary from home-to-home. Some common risk factors:

- lead-based paint
- older homes with lead service lines or lead plumbing
- water softeners
- brass fixtures or lead solder inside the home
- grounding electrical connections to water pipes

MCMA helps to minimize your exposure to lead in water by controlling corrosive properties that could contribute to lead leaching from the pipes as it travels from our mains through your home's pipes to get to your tap. While lead service lines between our mains and your home's plumbing might be a problem, replacing them is not always the solution. Focusing only on lead service lines can draw attention away from other issues that you might need to address to reduce risk of exposure. In fact, replacing a lead service line can increase lead levels at the tap under certain conditions. Each home should be tested and evaluated individually.

## What are other ways I can protect my family from lead poisoning?

People can prevent lead poisoning through removing sources of lead in the home.

Some tips include:

- Keep children away from lead paint and lead dust.
- Clean around windows, play areas, and floors often.
- If you notice chipping paint, cover it right away with contact paper or duct tape and repair it quickly.
- Check your house for lead, and make sure all repairs are done safely without stirring up lead dust.
- Get your children tested for lead at age 12–24 months.
- Give your children foods with calcium, iron, and vitamin C, which may help keep lead out of the body.

## Lowering the risk of lead in your tap water is easy and free.

If you think you have lead plumbing, follow these easy steps. If you're not sure, visit [www.mifflincountyh2o.com](http://www.mifflincountyh2o.com) for a fact sheet on how to check your pipes for lead.

- Flush your cold water spigot for three minutes first thing in the morning before drinking or cooking with the water
- To save water, flushing can also be accomplished by using water for other purposes like showering, flushing toilets or laundry
- Don't use hot water for cooking or drinking
- If you have a filter, change the cartridge according to the manufacturer's recommendations
- Make sure your water softener (if you have one) only softens the hot water