U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (Provisional)

Just the Facts

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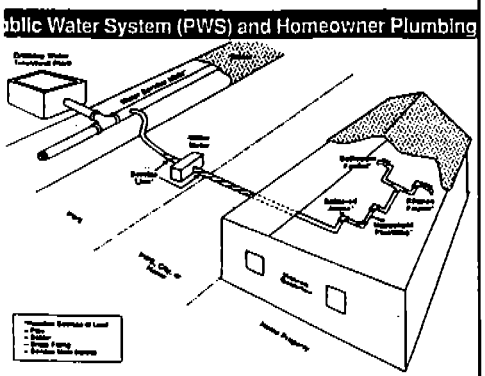
Managing Lead in Drinking Water



- **Housing Occupants**
- **Exposure Potential**
- **Testing**

Presently, U.S. Army installations are developing a profile of the quantity of lead in drinking water onpost. Installations will take actions to minimize your lead exposure once sampling and analysis are complete. To further minimize your risk to lead in drinking water, the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine [USACHPPM (Provisional)] has developed the following recommendations. If you live offpost, these recommendations may be appropriate, or you may wish to contact your local public health department.

Exposure Potential

Lead in drinking water can significantly increase a person's total exposure to lead. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that drinking water can make up to 20 percent of a person's total exposure to lead. Young children, infants, and fetuses appear to be particularly vulnerable to lead poisoning. A child's mental and physical development can be affected by overexposure to lead. High lead levels may also cause high blood pressure and fertility problems in adults.

When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems containing lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon after returning from work or school, can contain fairly high levels of lead.

Reducing Exposure Potential

In 1991, the EPA passed regulations under the Safe Drinking Water Act requiring public water suppliers to analyze drinking water samples and to determine the amount of lead in drinking water. Testing the water is essential because you cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water.

If this testing indicates that elevated lead levels are present [i.e., if 90 percent of the samples have more than 15 parts per billion (ppb) of lead], water suppliers are required to notify their customers of the problem and take steps toward reducing the high lead levels. These steps may include treating the water to make it less corrosive and replacing lead service lines.

If testing indicates that the drinking water drawn from a water system or specific tap contains lead above 15 ppb, consumers can take the following precautions:

- Let the water run from the tap for 30-60 seconds before using it for drinking or cooking if the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than 2 hours.
- Draw water from the cold tap and heat it on the stove or in a microwave oven if you need hot water for cooking and drinking.

Lead in Water Fountains

Water fountains and coolers are of special concern because of their prevalence in schools where children are drinking water. The EPA has identified specific water coolers that contain components made of lead (references 1 and 2). Contact your installation preventive medicine office for a list of such water coolers. These coolers should be taken out of service immediately and replaced with lead-free coolers from the manufacturer. The list was originally intended for schools but is applicable to all public areas, such as office buildings and hospitals.

Additional Information

For more information on lead in your drinking water, contact your installation preventive medicine office. Personnel there can assist in determining if lead is a problem in your residence or workplace and can offer additional guidance on reducing exposure potential.

1. *Federal Register, 18 January 1990, Vol 55, No. 12.*

2. *Federal Register, 4 October 1989, Vol 54, No. 67.*

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