

## Important Information About Lead Water Service Replacement

### **Lead pipes and drinking water: Toronto's Lead Mitigation Strategy**

Replacing the lead pipe that delivers water into to the home is the best way to reduce exposure to lead from drinking water. In 2011 Toronto City Council approved the Lead in Drinking Water Mitigation Strategy to help reduce lead in drinking water.

As part of the new strategy the Water Service Replacement Program will continue to replace the City-owned portion of lead pipes that supply water to residential homes in coordination with other planned construction projects such as road reconstruction, watermain reconstruction, watermain structural lining and sewer reconstruction.

### **Who is responsible for the water pipe?**

The water pipe, also known as a water service connection, is the pipe that delivers water to each residence from a watermain in the street. The water pipe consists of two sections: the first section runs from the watermain to the property line and is owned and maintained by the City; the second section runs from the property line into the house and is the responsibility of the homeowner.

### **Which homes will have the City-owned portion of the water services replaced?**

All homes within the construction area noted in the attached notice and determined to have a substandard water service will have the City-owned portion of their water service replaced. These include any properties with lead services.

### **Advice to homeowners**

#### **How will I know if the City-owned portion of the water service will be replaced?**

A City staff member or the City-hired contractor will advise you in person, or by a notice left at your home, if the City-owned portion of your water service is substandard and needs to be replaced when construction begins. However, you should begin preparation for the possible replacement of the private portion of a lead water service now.

#### **How do I know if the private side of my water service is lead?**

If your home was built before the mid-1950s and your water service has never been replaced, it is most likely made of lead. A plumber or home inspector can confirm this for you. If your water service is made of lead, the City of Toronto *strongly encourages* you to replace the private-side of your lead water service – replacing the entire water service is the only way to ensure that drinking water does not come into contact with lead pipes while traveling into your home.

#### **What steps should I take to replace my portion of the water service?**

- You should get quotes from at least three City-licensed plumbing or drain contractors before deciding which company to hire. Replacing the private portion of the water service can cost approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000 depending on your property.
- You may also contact the City-hired contractor (contact info will be provided in a Construction Notice one to four weeks before construction starts) to get an estimate of the cost to replace the private portion of the water service at the same time as the public portion.
- In some cases the City-hired contractor may not be able to provide a quote for replacing the private portion of water services on your street due to their schedule. If that is the case, you will need to hire your own contractor.
- If you hire your own contractor, the replacement of the private portion of your water service must be done before or after the City-hired contractor replaces the City-owned side. Private contractors cannot work at the site at the same time as the City's contractor.
- A Plumbing Permit is required for the replacement of a water service
- You are responsible for any contract you engage in.

## **Post-Replacement Steps**

After replacement of a lead water service, lead levels in your drinking water may temporarily increase. Take the following steps immediately after your water service is replaced to reduce the possibility of lead exposure:

- Flush the new water service by running the cold water tap for 15 minutes from the lowest tap in your home (typically the basement) to remove any loose particles.
- Do not open a hot water faucet until the system is flushed (or you may introduce sediment into your hot water heater).
- Remove and thoroughly rinse all faucet aerators in your home to remove any particles that may be trapped.

All homeowners who have their lead water service replaced will be supplied with a NSF-53-certified, faucet-mounted filter for installation onto the kitchen tap immediately after the service is replaced. Toronto Public Health advises that homes with children under the age of six, a pregnant woman or nursing mother continue using an NSF-53 certified filter for approximately three months after the lead water service is replaced.

After taking the above immediate steps, the following actions are recommended for three months after a lead water service replacement:

- Flush from the faucets for several minutes before using the water for cooking and drinking.
- Regularly check and rinse the faucet aerators to remove any trapped particles.

## **Potential health impacts of lead in drinking water**

### **Who is at the highest risk from lead in drinking water?**

Toronto Public Health advises that lead in drinking water can have negative health impacts on children under the age of six years as well as pregnant women or nursing mothers (who can pass lead onto the child). For more information about the health impacts of lead in drinking water visit [www.toronto.ca/health](http://www.toronto.ca/health) or call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600.

### **Do I need to replace the private portion of my lead water service?**

Lead in drinking water can have negative health impacts on the at-risk people in your home (see previous question for who is at risk). Replacing the water service is the only way to ensure your drinking water does not come into contact with lead pipes while traveling into your home. While homeowners at this time are *not required* to replace the private portion of their water service connections, Toronto Public Health strongly recommends that homeowners with **lead service** connections replace the private-side of the service prior to or immediately after the City replaces the public-side.

### **What steps should I take to help prevent lead in my drinking water?**

If you live in a home with a lead water service you should use standard flushing practices. Flushing is simply running your tap until the water is cold to the touch and then for one minute after; this should be done before using the water for cooking or drinking. If you have children under the age of six, a pregnant woman or nursing mother in your home, you should install a NSF-53 certified lead filter.

**More information:** Visit [www.toronto.ca/leadpipes](http://www.toronto.ca/leadpipes) for more information about lead in drinking water and a current schedule of the Water Service Replacement Program, or call 311.