GET THE LEAD OUT, NILES, OHIO!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

IS THE CITY OF NILES' WATER SAFE?

The water supplied by the City of Niles' Water Department is safe. Our water is routinely tested and consistently meets state and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards, ensuring optimal quality for our residents. If no lead or other contamination is introduced to the water in your service lines or other water fixtures in your home, your tap water is safe.

We are committed to providing you with information because you are the customer. For more information about your drinking water, visit the lead sections of these websites: EPA: epa.gov/lead and the Niles Water Department: cityofnilesoh.gov/services/utilities/water-wastewater/

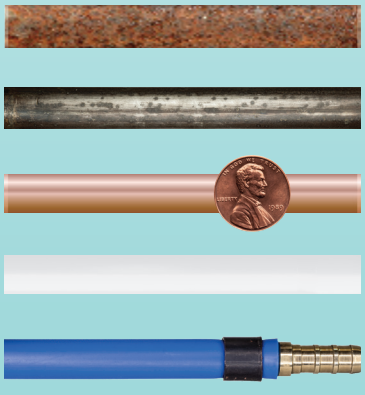
This FAQ document aims to provide Niles' residents with essential tools and information about our Water Department's ongoing efforts, including the water service line inventory, lead service line notices, and Lead Service Line Replacement Initiative.

All information detailed on this document is based on public informational material from the U.S. and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the Niles Water Department.

Types of Water Pipes

Follow the guidance below or contact a licensed plumber to determine the material of your water pipes. To identify the material of your service pipes on private property, check your household water service connection, typically located in the basement.

Homeowners should identify and replace old household pipes, particularly galvanized plumbing and sources of lead. The type of plumbing can vary throughout your household.



Lead: A dull, silver-grey color that is easily scratched with a coin. Use a magnet - strong magnets will *not* cling to lead pipes.

Galvanized: A dull, silver-grey color. Use a magnet - strong magnets *will* cling to galvanized pipes.

Copper: The color of a copper penny. A magnet *won't* cling to copper pipes.

Plastic: White, rigid pipe that is joined to water supply piping with a clamp.

PEX: A type of plastic pipe that may be red, white, blue, or black.

FAQ

WHAT IS LEAD AND WHY IS IT A HEALTH CONCERN?

Lead is a naturally occurring element found in all parts of our environment. It is a toxic, soft metal that can be found in our homes, paint, dust, air, soil, food, and water, and can pose risks to human health. There is no safe level of exposure to lead in drinking water.

Exposure to lead in drinking water can cause serious health effects in all age groups. Infants and children can have decreases in IQ and attention span. Lead exposure can lead to new learning and behavior problems or further affect existing learning and behavior issues. The children of women who are exposed to lead before or during pregnancy can have increased risk of these adverse health effects. Adults can have increased risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, kidney, or nervous system problems.

HOW DOES LEAD GET INTO DRINKING WATER?

Lead is not present in the treated water or source water supplied to your home. However, lead can enter your drinking water from the service line (pipe) that connects your home to the distribution line (water main) or from pipes and faucets in your home. The most common sources of lead in drinking water are lead and galvanized pipes, faucets, and fixtures. In homes served by lead services lines, these pipes are typically the most significant source of lead in the water. Lead can attach to the inner surface of galvanized service lines and be released into drinking water over time. Service lines made of galvanized iron or steel that are (or were previously) downstream of lead service lines are classified as galvanized requiring replacement (GRR).

Lead pipes are more likely to be found in older cities and homes built before 1988 due to the state ban on lead plumbing that year. In homes without lead service lines, the most common sources of lead getting into water are copper pipes with lead solder (banned in 1988) and lead-containing brass faucets (containing up to 8% lead until 2014). Identifying and ultimately removing lead and GRR service lines is an important way to protect public health.

IS WATER THE ONLY SOURCE OF LEAD IN HOUSES AND BUILDINGS?

No. While water may be a source of exposure to lead in houses and buildings, lead-based paint, dust, contaminated soil, lead-glazed pottery, and some toys and jewelry may also contain lead. Lead-based paint and lead-containing toys pose a significant risk, especially for young children. For more information on protecting your family from lead in your home, please visit: epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-sources-lead

TALKING POINTS:
MINIMIZING LEAD EXPOSURE

WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE MY EXPOSURE TO LEAD FROM MY TAP WATER?

Below are recommended actions that you may take, separately or in combination, if you are concerned about lead in your drinking water. The list is not intended to be a complete list or to imply that all actions equally reduce the presence of lead in drinking water.

HAVE YOUR WATER TESTED.

Visit the Ohio Department of Health at: odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/childhood-lead-poisoning/lead-in-drinking-water to learn about lead and how to have your water tested.

LET YOUR WATER RUN.

The more time water has been sitting in your home's pipes, the more lead it may contain. Before drinking, flush your home's pipes by running the tap, taking a shower, doing laundry, or doing a load of dishes. The amount of time to run the water will depend on whether your home has a lead service line or not, and the length of the lead service line. Residents should contact the Niles Water Department for recommendations about flushing times in our community.

LEARN ABOUT CONSTRUCTION IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.

Be aware of any construction or maintenance work that could disturb your lead service line. Construction may cause more lead to be released from a lead service line.

USE COLD WATER.

Only use cold water for cooking, drinking, and making baby formula. Hot water dissolves lead more quickly than cold water.

CLEAN YOUR AERATOR.

Remove and clean your aerator regularly and replace annually or as needed. The small round piece on the bottom of your faucet is the aerator. Your aerator can accumulate lead particles which can contaminate your water so it should be cleaned regularly.

USE YOUR FILTER PROPERLY.

If you use a filter, make sure that is certified by a third-party certifier to remove lead. Check the filter and cartridge packaging for these certifications. Read the directions to learn how to properly install and use your cartridge and when to replace it. Using the cartridge after it has expired can make it less effective at removing lead. Do not run hot water through the filter. For more information visit: epa.gov/water-research/consumer-tool-identifying-point-use-and-pitcher-filters-certified-reduce-lead

If you use a filter, make sure that is certified by a third-party certifier to remove lead. Check the filter and cartridge packaging for these certifications. Read the directions to learn how to properly install and use your cartridge and when to replace it.

WORK WITH THE NILES WATER DEPARTMENT TO ASSIST IN THE IDENTIFICATION AND REMOVAL OF LEAD AND GRR (GALVANIZED REQUIRING REPLACEMENT) SERVICE LINES.

Your water system is taking action to reduce potential risk by verifying the material of the water service line inside your home to complete the EPA required water service line inventory. Visit the Niles Water Department website at cityofnilesoh.gov/services/utilities/water-wastewater to learn more. Contact our information office for questions or assistance verifying your water service line material. To complete the service line identification survey, visit 120water.formstack.com/forms/cityofniles?id=5621542

GET YOUR CHILD TESTED TO DETERMINE THE LEAD LEVELS IN THEIR BLOOD.

Your healthcare provider and your public health agency can provide information about how you can have your child's blood tested for lead. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that public health actions be initiated when the level of lead in a child's blood is 3.5 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL) or more. For more information on lead in drinking water, contact your local health department or water department for guidance. For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's Web site at epa.gov/lead, or call the National Lead Information Center at **1-800-424-LEAD**.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE A LEAD SERVICE LINE, GRR SERVICE LINE, OR LEAD PLUMBING?

1. A licensed plumber may be able to assess your faucets, fixtures, and service line for lead.
2. EPA has developed an online step-by-step guide, Protect Your Tap, to help people identify lead pipes in their homes. The online tool is located at epa.gov/pyt.
3. Once you have identified your service line material, scan the QR code below to report your material type to the Niles Water Department.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM CONCERNED ABOUT MY FAMILY'S EXPOSURE TO LEAD? SHOULD WE GET TESTED?

A blood test is the only way to find out whether you or a family member already has lead poisoning. Call your doctor or local health department to arrange for a blood test. You can protect your family every day by:

- Regularly cleaning floors, windowsills, and other surfaces.
- Washing children's hands, bottles, pacifiers, and toys often.
- Making sure children eat a healthy, nutritious diet consistent with the USDA's dietary guidelines.
- Wiping off shoes before entering the house.
- Using an EPA-certified firm for renovations, or if you are doing the renovation yourself, using lead-safe work practices. View more information here: epa.gov/lead.

DO I HAVE TO GET A FILTER IF I DON'T HAVE ONE?

The need for a home treatment device is a customer decision. If you choose to purchase a home filter, NSF International created a Consumer Guide to NSF Certified Lead Filtration Devices for Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water. For more information, visit www.nsf.org/info/leadfiltrationguide. To view an expanded listing of certified filters, visit Water Quality Association's product page at wqa.org/Find-Products. Always consult the device manufacturer for information on treatment device maintenance and potential impacts to your drinking water or household plumbing. EPA also offers information on identifying drinking water filters here: epa.gov/water-research/consumer-tool-identifying-point-use-and-pitcher-filters-certified-reduce-lead.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD?

You can find out more information about lead by visiting the lead sections of these websites: EPA: epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water; Niles Water Department: cityofnilesoh.gov/services/utilities/water-wastewater/; or Ohio EPA's Learn About Lead website: epa.ohio.gov/monitor-pollution/pollution-issues/learn-about-lead.

LEAD SERVICE LINE NOTICES AND NEXT STEPS

WHY DID I RECEIVE A NOTICE FROM MY WATER SYSTEM SAYING I HAVE A LEAD SERVICE LINE?

You received this notice because Ohio is completing Service Line Inventory Material (SLIM) notifications in accordance with EPA's Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR). Under this mandate water systems are required to notify customers when it is known they are served by a lead or GRR service line, or when their service line material is unknown.

I DID NOT RECEIVE A LEAD SERVICE LINE NOTICE BUT SOMEONE I KNOW (E.G., YOUR NEIGHBOR) RECEIVED ONE, WHY IS THIS?

Homes that were found to be served by a non-lead water service line, did not receive a notification, and no action is needed. If you are aware that your service line material is lead and did not receive a notice, please contact the Niles Water Department at **(330) 544-9000, extension #1200**.

I RECEIVED A LETTER SAYING I HAVE A GALVANIZED REQUIRING REPLACEMENT SERVICE LINE, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Galvanized service lines are steel pipes that have been dipped in a protective zinc coating to prevent corrosion and rust. Galvanized piping was commonly installed in homes built before 1960 and was used as an alternative to lead pipes for water supply lines. Galvanized service lines that once were, or may have been, downstream of a lead service line are also considered lead service lines for the purposes of identification and replacement. The notices described above are also required to be sent to addresses served by galvanized requiring replacement lines. If you have a galvanized requiring replacement service line in your home, it will need to be replaced just as a lead service line would.

I HAVE A PRIVATE WELL, DO I NEED TO WORRY ABOUT LEAD IN MY DRINKING WATER?

While lead is often recognized as an issue in public water system infrastructure, residents served by private wells may still have exposure to lead in drinking water via lead service lines, plumbing in their homes, or rarely, lead in groundwater. Residences which were built prior to 1988 may be at higher risk, as lead solder, or other components using lead may have been used during construction. Owners of homes served by private wells should consider testing their water for lead both at the source, as well as at their tap. Ohio EPA's Private Water System Program offers investigation of contamination for private well users and can assist in locating a certified laboratory for lead analysis in drinking water. Visit odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/private-water-systems-program/private-water-systems-program for more information.

CAN I CONTINUE TO USE MY WATER IF I HAVE A LEAD OR UNKNOWN SERVICE LINE?

Yes. Even though your service line is identified to be of lead material, you can still use water as you normally do. Your water continues to meet water quality standards. We treat our water to prevent corrosion of service lines and household plumbing, and our ongoing lead and copper compliance testing continues to meet state and federal water quality regulations, including those set for lead. To further minimize your risk of exposure to lead in drinking water, consider following the "Minimizing Lead Exposure" tips on page 3 of this FAQ document.

NOW THAT I'VE RECEIVED A NOTICE, WHAT IS THE NILES WATER DEPARTMENT DOING? WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE INVENTORY IS DONE?

Upon Water Service Line Inventory completion, in accordance with the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI), the Niles Water Department is implementing a *Lead Service Line Replacement Plan (LSLR Plan)* to further identify unknown service line materials and replace lead identified service lines in our community.

- ***Niles Water Department's Initial Steps:*** The Niles Water Department's first step was to collect data on water service line materials serving each home in the City of Niles through historical records and visual inspections to complete the federally required inventory. Residents can view the inventory online at https://pws-ptd.120wateraudit.com/nilesoh.
- ***Inventory and LSLR Plan Next Steps:*** the LSLR Plan will create a 1) prioritized schedule to replace lead service lines and 2) funding strategy to pay for service line replacement. The City of Niles intends to apply for state and federal funding to help pay for private lead service line replacement.

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR PIPE REPLACEMENT?

Water systems must comply with EPA and state regulations. EPA's 2024 passage of the LCRI mandates water systems replace all lead and galvanized service lines, at a rate of 10% each year, within 10 years of finalizing the LSLR Plan in 2027. The City of Niles plans to complete all LSLRs by the end of 2037.

WHY DOES REPLACEMENT TAKE SO LONG?

In essence, while lead service line replacement is crucial for public health, it's a meticulous process that demands careful planning, coordination with stakeholders, compliance with regulations, and adequate resources to ensure safe and effective outcomes. Below are some key factors involved in the lead service line replacement that impact the timeline.

Key Factors

- **Scope of Work:** Replacing lead pipes involves identifying and replacing not only on public property but also on private property.
- **Resource Allocation:** Prioritizing areas with the highest risk and coordinating schedules with property owners.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Compliance with regulatory requirements and obtaining necessary permits and approvals can impact the timeline.
- **Engineering and Planning:** Water systems are unique in design and require detail assessment and planning to ensure the replacement is done correctly.
- **Community Engagement:** Engaging with residents through outreach initiatives is essential to the success of the lead service lines replacement program.

Thank you for sharing our mission to uphold a safe and healthy community!