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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
What You Need to Know About Lead in Your Drinking Water

Lead has gotten a lot of attention in the media lately. It may be causing you to ask questions such as “how do I know if my drinking water is safe?” or “what is lead poisoning and how could it affect my child’s health?” The Eastern Highlands Health District is encouraging residents to stay healthy and safe by ensuring their environment is free of lead.

Lead is a common metal found throughout the human environment in lead-based paint, air, soil, household dust, and in drinking water. Lead poisoning occurs when lead builds up in the body, often over a period of months or years. Children under the age of six and pregnant women are at the highest risk for lead poisoning because lead has been shown to slow down normal mental and physical development of infants and children. In pregnant women lead poisoning could lead to miscarriage or premature birth.

Lead rarely occurs naturally in water. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of corrosion, or wearing away, of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and plumbing. This means that lead contamination of drinking water occurs most often in your home’s own plumbing. This could be a result of lead pipes or components of your plumbing system that have lead in them. If your home is connected to a public water supply, you can contact your supplier to inquire about lead contamination in your water. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) does not regulate private wells. If you are connected to a private well, you will need to test your water and treat it if tests indicate high levels of lead.

Director of Health Robert Miller comments that “the only way to confirm that your water is safe for drinking is to test the water. Residents who live in homes with lead pipes or who live in an older home should make testing their water for lead a priority.”

It’s important that you follow instructions for collecting the water samples very carefully. Once you collect your water sample the EPA recommends sending samples to a certified laboratory for analysis. A list of certified laboratories that test for lead in drinking water is available on the Eastern Highlands Health District’s website.



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If your test results indicate high levels of lead in your water follow these steps:

- “Flush” the tap before using water for cooking or drinking. This means running the cold water faucet for a few minutes until the water gets noticeably colder.
- Do not cook with or drink water from the hot tap since hot water can dissolve more lead.
- The human body does not absorb lead in water through the skin, so water can still be used for showering.
- Consider replacing lead-containing plumbing fixtures.
- Consider alternate sources or treatment of water.

Initially, lead poisoning can be hard to detect. There may be no symptoms, or symptoms may be easily mistaken for flu or other illnesses. Over time children with high levels of lead may begin to display symptoms such as developmental delays, loss of appetite, weight loss or abdominal pain. It’s important to have every child under the age of six tested for lead poisoning. Lead screening is required annually for each child nine to thirty-five months of age. The only reliable means for assessing lead exposure is through blood testing. Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead.

Medical professionals agree that lead exposure should be kept at a minimum throughout the entire lifespan. Keeping an eye on your daily surroundings, such as making sure your drinking water is lead-free, is an easy way to ensure optimal health of yourself and your family. Please visit www.ehhd.org for more information on environmental health and how to live a lead-free life.