



Lead in Drinking Water – Frequently Asked Questions Cities of Kalamazoo and Parchment

1. What is lead?

Lead is a highly toxic metal. It was commonly used in:

- Household paint (banned in 1978, however homes built before 1978 are more likely to have lead-based paint.
- Gasoline (banned in 1995).
- Plumbing pipes and fixtures.

2. How can I be exposed to lead?

In many cases, most exposure to lead is from paint dust, paint chips, and soil contaminated with lead. Lead can also get into your body by drinking or cooking with water containing lead. Young children's bodies absorb lead more easily than adults, and lead can be passed from a mother to her unborn child. For these reasons, lead in drinking water can be an important source of exposure for pregnant women, young children, and infants that are fed powdered formula. Lead is not absorbed through the skin. Bathing or showering in water containing lead should be safe.

3. How does lead get into the water supply?

Lead can enter drinking water when service lines and plumbing that contain lead corrode, especially where the water has high acidity or low mineral content that corrodes pipes and fixtures. The most common problem is with brass or chrome-plated brass faucets and fixtures with lead solder, from which significant amounts of lead can enter into the water, especially hot water.

4. What are the potential health effects from lead exposure?

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.

5. What should I do if I'm concerned about lead in my drinking water?

There are simple steps you can take to reduce your risk of exposure to lead in drinking water:

- Flush your water before drinking. After the water turns cold, let the water run 6-7 minutes longer in the tap before you use it for drinking or cooking.
- Always use cold water for drinking and cooking.
- Remove and clean the aerators on your faucets monthly.
- Consider using a filter meeting NSF Standard 53 for lead removal for drinking and replace the filter according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use bottled water, especially for preparing baby formula.

6. Why does flushing the water before drinking make it safer to drink?

Lead enters drinking water when it comes in contact with individual homes that have lead service lines or internal plumbing made with lead. The most important thing you can do is run your water before you take a drink. The more time water has been sitting in your home's pipes, the more lead it may contain. Therefore, if your water has not been used for several hours, run the water before using it for drinking or cooking. This flushes lead-containing water from the pipes. Additional flushing may be required for homes that have been vacant or have a longer service line.

7. Where can I go to get my water tested?

Please call the City of Kalamazoo Lead and Copper Hotline at (269) 337-8550.

8. When will I know if my water is safe to drink?

To know about lead levels in the water at your home, we encourage you to schedule a test of your water.

9. Will it cost me anything to get my water tested for lead?

No. The City of Kalamazoo is offering free lead and copper water testing to all customers of the former Parchment water system. Please call the [City of Kalamazoo at \(269\) 337-8550](tel:269-337-8550) to make an appointment for sampling.

10. Is Parchment giving away water filters or bottled water?

The City of Parchment and the City of Kalamazoo are providing filters at no charge to all customers of the former Parchment water system who have a lead service. To make arrangements to receive a water filter, please call [Parchment City Hall at \(269\) 349-3785](tel:269-349-3785) or [City of Kalamazoo \(269\) 337-8550](tel:269-337-8550).

11. What is a lead service line?

A service line connects the water main in the street to your house. In Parchment homes, especially those built prior to 1960s, the service lines may be made of lead.

12. How do I know if I have a lead service line going to my house?

The City of Kalamazoo is willing to come out and check the service line for you. Please call the [City of Kalamazoo lead and copper hotline at \(269\) 337-8550](tel:269-337-8550) to set up an appointment for a staff person to come out to your home.

Or you can 1) hire a licensed plumber to inspect the plumbing to do a plumbing inspection on your home; or 2) look at the plumbing in your basement yourself and look for things like pipe color (copper-colored or grey) and whether a magnet sticks to your plumbing. Copper plumbing will be reddish in color. Grey pipe that has a magnet stick to it is likely galvanized. Grey pipe that a magnet will not stick to it is likely lead.

13. How was this problem discovered?

In response to significant changes in Parchment's water system, we started an extensive sampling and educational program in areas of the community where we suspected there are lead service lines. In the fall of 2018, the City collected over 50 samples from almost 40 homes in Parchment. The 90th percentile of the samples collected was 16 parts per billion (ppb). This exceeds the lead Action Level of 15 ppb. Exceeding the Action Level triggers additional actions including, but not limited to, increased investigative sampling of water quality and educational outreach to customers.

14. What is being done?

Parchment distributed educational materials regarding lead to all its customers in August 2018, and is issuing a Public Advisory for all its water customers to notify them of the lead and copper rule exceedance.

As part of the extensive sampling and education program, homes that have tested above the Action Level of 15 ppb for lead were provided a filter. As part of this advisory, anyone who is interested in having their water tested for lead and has a lead service will also be provided a filter until which time the problem has been fixed and the water samples are within the acceptable limits.

15. Where can I get my child's blood tested for lead?

Should speak with your family doctor about blood lead level testing if you believe your child has been exposed to lead or is at risk of lead exposure.

16. What does an "elevated blood lead level" mean?

In Michigan, a blood lead level (BLL) of 5 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) or higher is considered elevated. Most people who have an elevated blood lead level do not look or act sick. A blood lead test is the only way to determine a blood lead level. Talk with your doctor or the Kalamazoo County Health Department about getting a lead test for you or your child if:

- You believe you have been exposed to lead
- You are at risk of lead exposure

17. Is the City of Kalamazoo replacing lead service lines?

In conjunction with the forthcoming regulations, the City of Kalamazoo will be required to replace a minimum of seven percent (7%) in 2019 and five percent (5%) of confirmed lead services starting in 2021. During this time, the City of Kalamazoo will be gathering information through testing and investigation to confirm the presence of a lead service. These homes will be added to the listing of services to be replaced in the upcoming years.

18. Where can I go to find more information?

Water Service Line Questions: City of Kalamazoo (269) 337-8550

Getting Water Tested: City of Kalamazoo (269) 337-8550

Getting a Lead Test for a Child: Kalamazoo County Health Department or your doctor's office

Safe Drinking Water Act Questions: [SDWA](#)

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE, formerly MDEQ)

Media Questions:

City of Parchment City Hall and Kalamazoo Public Services Director's Office (269) 337-8660

Other General Questions:

City of Parchment and Kalamazoo lead and copper hotline (269) 337-8550

CONTACT INFORMATION

City of Parchment

Website: www.parchment.org

Phone: (269) 349-3785

City of Kalamazoo

Website: www.kalamazoo.org or www.ProtectYourWater.net

Phone: (269) 337-8550

Kalamazoo County Health Department

Website: www.kalcounty.com/hcs

Phone: (269) 373-5210

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE, formerly MDEQ)

Website: www.michigan.gov/egle

Phone: 1-800-662-9278

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Website: www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/

Phone: 1-800-648-6942