



THE FACTS ABOUT CHICAGO'S DRINKING WATER

Chicago has a solid reputation for high quality, good tasting water for good reason: Chicago's water is safe and pure, meeting or exceeding all standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Illinois EPA and the drinking water industry. The safety and quality of Chicago's tap water is our top priority, and the Chicago Department of Water Management (DWM) continually monitors water quality and performs testing 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Further, DWM will test any resident's water at any time for lead or other particles; residents can call 311 to request free water testing at their address if they have concerns about water quality. In addition to providing testing upon request, DWM tests in high risk areas as defined by the U.S. EPA.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is Chicago's drinking water safe?

Yes. Chicago's water is safe and pure, meeting or exceeding all standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Illinois EPA and the drinking water industry.

Where can I find information on what is in Chicago's water?

Every year, DWM sends Chicago residents an annual water quality report, which includes details about where our water comes from, what it contains, and how it compares to standards set by regulatory agencies. The information in the report comes from the Illinois EPA. The report is posted at: www.cityofchicago.org/water

How does DWM keep our water safe?

DWM maintains safe and clean drinking water by:

- Distributing fresh, virtually lead-free water when it leaves DWM's water treatment plants;
- Monitoring Chicago's water at different points along the distribution system 24/7;
- Introducing corrosion control into Chicago's water mains to form a coating to minimize the risk that lead and other possible contaminants leach into the water;
- Providing residences and businesses with complete instructions for flushing whenever there is any water infrastructure work being done in the vicinity and;
- Providing free drinking water testing by a certified laboratory completely free of charge.

How can lead get into drinking water?

Chicago has an excellent water source – Lake Michigan. However, many older single family and two-flat residences built before 1986 are likely to have lead service lines connecting the individual home to the water main. These older homes may also have lead solder and older interior household plumbing containing lead. To mitigate the effects of these potential sources of lead exposure, DWM has a corrosion control program in which a blended phosphate is added



to the water, forming a coating on the pipes from the treatment plants to the faucet, minimizing the risk that lead and other metal contaminants will leach into the water. As a result of this successful program, Chicago's residential water has consistently met and exceeded state and federal standards.

What is being done to determine if lead in water causes lead poisoning in children?

Since 2011, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and DWM have been evaluating whether drinking water is a source of lead for children with elevated blood lead levels. Currently, when children are found to have an elevated blood lead level, water testing is offered as part of the home evaluation for lead-based paint hazards. The results have reaffirmed that the great majority of lead poisoning in Chicago children is a result of exposure to lead-based paint. Chicago has achieved significant success in reducing the incidence of lead poisoning in children in recent years. Today, less than one in 100 children develop elevated blood lead levels as compared to a staggering one in four children in the late 1990s. Many homes built before 1978 (the year lead was banned in paint) still have some lead-based paint present and if not properly maintained or removed, lead paint will crack, peel and turn into dust. Unsafe renovation and remodeling practices can also create lead-based paint hazards.

Do I need to have my water tested for lead?

To protect the health of residents, DWM has an aggressive corrosion control program in which phosphate is used to form a coating on lead pipes to minimize the risk that lead or other materials leach into the water.

Stagnant water is more likely to collect metal contaminants that might have leached into the system. The more your water runs, the cleaner it comes out of the faucet. Turning on a faucet, flushing a toilet, taking a shower, running the dishwasher or doing laundry- all of it counts toward flushing your water system. You should always run the water in your home for five minutes after the system has been stagnant for four hours or more.

DWM offers free water testing to any resident who is concerned about water quality; residents can call 311 to request this free service.

Does water main replacement increase the lead in residential drinking water?

There are no large scale reliable studies that have used before and after samples to explore the possible impacts associated with water main construction on water quality in residences with lead service lines, which are often in older single family and two-flat homes. Because of this, and because of DWM's proactive approach to water quality research, DWM launched a first-of-its kind study to determine the possible impacts of water main construction on water quality for single family and two-flat residences with lead service lines. The study is ongoing. DWM will provide more information when the study is concluded.



How do I get my water tested?

Call 311 or visit www.chicagowaterquality.org to request a free water lead test kit. One will be sent to you with instructions for collecting the water samples. When you are done with the sampling, simply visit www.chicagowaterquality.org and schedule a time to have your samples picked up. You will be notified of your results and if they exceed the EPA action level, DWM will visit your home with a sanitary engineer, plumber and electrician to determine the cause and create a custom action plan for you to bring the level down.

How can I help improve the quality of Chicago's water?

DWM is conducting a large-scale Water Quality Study on the possible impact of water infrastructure construction on residential lead levels and they are looking for volunteers. To be eligible, you must be registered for water meter installation or reside on a block where DWM will be installing a new water main. DWM will test your water before and after construction and will inform you of the results. As with lead test kits, DWM will follow up if your home tests above the EPA action level. Register for the Water Quality Study today at www.chicagowatertesting.org or by calling 312-742-2406.