

# Potential of Lead and Copper in Drinking Water

Lead and copper in drinking water is a potential health concern in many Canadian communities.

Until 1975, lead was commonly used in plumbing fixtures, solders and pipes. Copper is still commonly used in plumbing infrastructure. Under certain conditions lead and copper can leach into drinking water through contact with plumbing infrastructure on private property.

On March 18, 2019, Health Canada published revised guidelines concerning lead concentration in Canadian drinking water. The reduction of the maximum allowable concentration of lead in drinking water went from 0.01 mg/L set in 1992 to 0.005 mg/L set in 2019.

The District of Kitimat initiated a lead and copper testing program in 2018, and concluded in 2019. Results indicated that there is a presence of lead in some older homes. The information below is provided by the District of Kitimat, in conjunction with Northern Health, to inform the public on this matter.

## Is there lead and copper in my drinking water?

Potentially. The District of Kitimat treats and regularly tests its source water to make sure it is safe according to drinking water guidelines. Water from municipal infrastructure consistently tests safe according to these guidelines. In some cases, water from private property has tested above the current guidelines. The main source of lead in Kitimat's drinking water is a result of plumbing infrastructure on private property.



**KITIMAT**  
A Marvel of Nature and Industry

In conjunction with:  **northern health**  
*the northern way of caring*



# What are the Health Concerns?

Prolonged exposure to elevated levels of lead can impair neurological development. Infants, children, and pregnant women are most susceptible to these effects. Refer to HealthLinkBC online for more details at: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/lead-drinking-water>

Although you need small amounts of copper to be healthy, too much copper in drinking water can lead to nausea, stomach pain, vomiting and diarrhea. More details can be found at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/water-talk-copper.html>

# How can I find out if my water is affected?

Lead and copper can be found in trace amounts in all water. Testing of lead and copper concentrations in water on private property is the responsibility of the property owner. You can purchase a variety of home based tests to assess the lead and copper levels in your water. However, Northern Health recommends that you test your tap water lead and copper levels using a lab that is accredited by the Canadian Association for Laboratory Accreditation (CALA) for analysis of lead. More information can be found at: <https://www.northernhealth.ca/services/environmental-health/drinking-water/drinking-water-resources>

# How can I reduce lead and copper in my water?

1. **Flush** - Flush faucets until the water runs as cold as possible before using the water for drinking, cooking, or teeth brushing. This is especially important when water has been sitting in the pipes for long periods of time. When the water runs noticeably colder, you are receiving fresh water from beyond the building. <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/lead-drinking-water>
2. **Filter** - Install lead removing filters on your drinking water taps. These are available at hardware stores. Filters should state that they are certified to NSF/ANSI standard 53.
3. **Replace** - Replace pipes and plumbing fixtures containing lead and copper in your building. Replace with CSA low lead content verified plumbing materials.

These options are at the homeowner's expense.

For more information visit [www.kitimat.ca](http://www.kitimat.ca) or call 250-632-8900



**KITIMAT**  
A Marvel of Nature and Industry

