

SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Information Leaflet

Lead and Drinking Water

The purpose of this leaflet is to explain how you can investigate the likelihood of a lead presence in your drinking water.

Background

Lead is commonly found in the environment. It comes from a variety of sources including vehicle exhausts and old paint work and may be present in air, food, soil or water. Lead piping is common in water supply networks throughout the country, particularly in urban areas. In many instances the piping runs underneath the housing network.

Up to early 1970's, lead was commonly used for water pipes. Part or all of the service pipe connecting the water main in the street to the kitchen tap may be made of lead. For this reason, the amount of lead in drinking water can sometimes be above the standard.

It is important to emphasise that water in the public supply network does not contain lead when it leaves the treatment works.

It is standard operational practice for Sligo County Council's Water Services staff to replace lead piping with PVC piping when laying new watermains in the public water supply network.

How Do I Know If There Are Lead Pipes In My Home?

If your home has been built or modernised since the early 1970's, or the pipework replaced from the stop valve outside your home to the kitchen tap, there should be no lead pipe on your property.

If you are unsure, you can make a simple check:

Inside your home -

Look in or behind the cupboards in your kitchen. You may also need to look in other places, e.g. the cupboard under the stairs. Find the pipe leading to the kitchen tap.

Check if it is lead along as much of its length as possible. Unpainted lead pipes are dull grey. They are also soft. If you scrape the surface gently with a knife, you will see the shiny, silver-coloured metal beneath.

Outside your home -

Open the flap of the stop valve outside your property. Examine the pipe leading from the stop valve to the property, and follow the procedure as outlined above.

Other pipe materials in common use are:

copper - bright, hard and dull brown

iron - dark, very hard and may be rusty

plastic - may be grey, black or blue.

Who Is Responsible For The Pipework?

The part of the service pipe leading from the stop valve outside your property to the kitchen tap point is your responsibility or your landlord's.

The part of the service pipe which links the water main in the street to the stop valve **outside** your property is the responsibility of the Sligo Local Authorities.

What Can I Do To Reduce Lead Levels?

If you have concerns regarding possible lead levels in your drinking water, take the following short-term precautions:

Do not drink water that has been standing in the pipes for long periods, for example, overnight.

In these circumstances, draw off a basin-full of water from the kitchen tap to clear the water which has been standing in the pipes. This need not be wasted but can be used on the garden or for something other than drinking or cooking. If the length of lead pipes exceeds 40 metres, additional water may need to be drawn off.

You can then use the water from the kitchen tap as usual.

If you have any lead pipework between the stop valve outside your home and your kitchen tap, the best solution is to replace it with copper or plastic pipework.

Other Useful Hints

Whether or not there is lead plumbing in your home:

- For drinking and cooking, always use the water from the cold water tap in the kitchen
- Avoid drinking water from bathroom taps.

Testing your water supply

If you have concerns and wish to have your water supply tested immediately for the presence of lead, Sligo County Council can provide you with the contact details of accredited laboratories.

In addition Sligo County Council carries out an ongoing programme of testing on public water supplies, which includes monitoring for the presence of lead.

Where Can I Get Further information and Advice?

- Contact Sligo County Council:

Customer Service Section: Ph 071 9111111 e-mail:
customerservices@sligococo.ie

Water Services Section: Ph: 071 9111373 e-mail:
waterservices@sligococo.ie