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## A Message from the Irvington Health Department

### Frequently Asked Questions: Lead in Water and Water Quality

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Mayor

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The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has identified lead-based paint within older homes as the primary lead concern within the state. The Irvington Health Department, however, understands that our residents have questions regarding the Township's water quality and the associated likelihood of lead in the water supply. As a result, we have compiled information to address frequently asked questions. If you have any additional questions or concerns related to any health-related matter, please feel free to contact the Department at 973-399-6647 or 6716.

#### **What company supplies the water for Irvington?**

New Jersey American Water, which delivers clean water to more than 2.5 million people in 17 counties in the Garden State. The Short Hills System specifically serves areas including Irvington, Livingston, Maplewood, Millburn (Short Hills), South Orange and west of the Garden State Parkway.

#### **What is the source of NJ American Water?**

This varies by system, but approximately 65% comes from surface supplies such as lakes, creeks and rivers and approximately 35% comes from wells.

#### **How often is Irvington's water supply evaluated?**

Community water suppliers, including NJ American Water, evaluate the local water supply annually and provide a related annual report.

#### **Does the annual water quality report indicate that there are concerns about the local water supply or that it is unsafe?**

The CCR is a general overview of the water quality delivered by your community water system. This report lists the regulated contaminants that were detected in the treated water and the level at which they were found for the preceding calendar year.

#### **How do I find out if there has been a violation in our public water standard?**

When water quality standards have not been met, local public water systems are required to notify you through the media, mail, or other means. Your annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) is another way to find out about the water quality in the area.

#### **How can I obtain a copy of the local water quality report?**

The report can be found by visiting the NJ American Water website ([www.newjerseyamwater.com](http://www.newjerseyamwater.com)). For additional information, you can also contact their Water Quality Inquiry Hot-Line at 973-564-5754 between 8a-3p, Monday through Friday.

#### **Is the Irvington Health Department monitoring the lead content in the local water supply?**

Regular tests that evaluate the presence of lead in drinking water are conducted by New Jersey American Water using the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) lead standards. Although NJ American Water has reported that their tests have not indicated that lead is an issue in the treated water leaving their facility, they have also indicated that lead and/or copper levels in some homes and businesses might be detected due to customer use of lead pipes, lead solder and molded metal faucets in household plumbing.

#### **How do I know if my water is ready to drink?**

The Safe Drinking Act passed by Congress in 1974 authorized the USEPA to set standards for the water delivered by every community water system in the United States serving more than 25 people. The USEPA establishes national health-based standards for drinking water to protect against both naturally-occurring and man-made contaminants that may be found in water supply sources. Our water utilities perform many tests each day to ensure that our customers receive high-quality drinking water.

**What are some conditions that may place families at greater risk for lead exposure from their water supply?**

Potential conditions include:

- Residing in homes or water systems that have lead pipes or a lead service line *(Homes built before 1930 are more likely to have lead plumbing systems and homes built before January 1986 are more likely to have lead-soldered joints),*
- Residing in homes or water systems that have copper pipes with lead solder,
- Residing in homes that were built before 1986 AND you have soft acidic water,
- Utilizing water that sits in the pipes for several hours without flushing the pipes

**Who is most at risk when exposed to lead?**

Young children and pregnant women.

**What are some health effects associated with high levels of lead?**

Lead levels that exceed the standards set by the EPA have been reported to cause behavioral and health concerns including gastrointestinal illness, neurological deficits, anemia, and kidney damage.

**Where can I get my water tested, if desired?**

Residents who are concerned about possible lead levels in their water should contact New Jersey American water, the Township’s water utility company. If you are served by a private well rather than New Jersey American water, you may choose to have your water tested by a state-certified laboratory. State certified private laboratories will collect and analyze samples for a fee depending on the type of test. Water samples should only be taken under their direction. A list of certified drinking water labs can be found on the NJ Department of Environmental Protection website or in phone directories.

**Is there anything that I can do to minimize my exposure or my family’s exposure to lead?**

Yes. While you cannot see, smell, or taste lead, know that boiling water will not remove lead. You can, however, reduce the exposure to lead within your household by:

- Flushing your tap for at least 30 seconds to 2 minutes before drinking or cooking with water, if the water in the faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. To conserve the water you flush from your pipes, consider using it to water plants or other household chores.
- Try to avoid cooking with or drinking water directly from the hot water faucet. Hot water has the potential to contain more lead than cold water. When you need hot water, heat cold water on the stove or microwave.

**Is it beneficial to flush my faucets every morning before using it to drink or use for food preparation?**

Yes. If you know or suspect that you have lead pipes or lead solder on copper piping, you may want to flush your tap before drinking or cooking with water if the water in the faucet has gone unused for more than six hours.

**Is it possible to have the level of lead in my blood tested?**

Yes. If you believe you have been exposed to lead, you can contact your healthcare provider for additional information. The Irvington Health Department also offers free lead testing. For additional information or to schedule an appointment, call 973-399-6716.

Resources:

- New Jersey American Water ([www.amwater.com](http://www.amwater.com))
- Center for Disease Control ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))
- NJ Department of Environmental Protection ([www.nj.gov/dep](http://www.nj.gov/dep))