

Lead in Drinking Water – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Is Dauphin's water currently safe to drink?

Yes. The water produced at Dauphin's Water Treatment Plant has met or exceeded all national and provincial standards for drinking water, without exception, from the day the plant was commissioned in 1999.

2. Why might there be lead in my drinking water?

The drinking water supplied to City residents does not contain any measurable amount of lead when it leaves the Water Treatment Plant. Lead is introduced into your drinking water through one or a combination of the following ways:

- Lead service line – the pipe that connects your home or business to the City's watermains was installed prior to 1950 and is made of lead;
- Lead solder in plumbing – prior to 1990, lead-containing solder was used in plumbing systems;
- Brass plumbing fixtures – brass plumbing fixtures (taps, ball valves, etcetera) are still permitted to contain a certain amount of lead.

3. How do I know if there is lead in my drinking water?

The only way to know for sure if there is lead in your drinking water is to have a sample tested at an accredited, independent laboratory. The City of Dauphin can help to arrange such testing; please see the attached information sheet or refer to the City's website at www.dauphin.ca/publicworks/lead/.

4. If the test results from the independent laboratory indicate that lead levels in my drinking water are above the current Health Canada standard, what options do I have?

If the test results exceed the guideline, you have multiple options, including:

- Installing an NSF-certified water filter or water filtration system that reduces lead in your drinking water and then changing the filter cartridge in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended standards;
- Removing and replacing all potential lead contaminating sources on your property, such as a lead service line, internal water lines within your home or business, and any brass water fixtures containing lead;
- Using alternate water for drinking and cooking. See FAQ #19 for comments on alternate water sources.

5. What are the potential health effects of lead in drinking water?

Ongoing exposure to small amounts of lead can cause health effects. The symptoms of long-term, low-level exposure may not be obvious, but could lead to changes in blood pressure, kidney function, fertility, and the nervous system. Short-term exposure to extremely high levels of lead can cause vomiting, diarrhea, convulsions, coma, or even death; but these types of exposure are more commonly associated with occupational hazards or poisoning, not with drinking water. Severe cases of lead poisoning are rare in Canada.

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6. Who is most vulnerable to lead in drinking water?

Everyone should minimize lead exposure as much as possible; however, some people are at higher risk. Children and unborn children are more sensitive to lead exposure than adults. Lead taken in by pregnant women may affect the health of unborn children. Children exposed to lead, even at low levels, may be at a higher risk for developmental delays, a decrease in language skills, intellectual disability, and delayed puberty. Population studies of low levels of lead exposure in children showed associations with reduced intelligence quotient (IQ) scores and adverse effects on behaviour compared with children who had less exposure to lead. The effects on individual children are variable and difficult to identify.

7. Are my pets at risk from lead in their drinking water?

Animals can be affected by increased lead exposure as well. Use water from a tap with a filter that is NSF-certified to reduce lead or use alternate safe water for pets.

8. Does the Province of Manitoba test for lead in drinking water?

Yes. All public water systems are required to test for lead on a regular basis and submit those test results to the Province. Testing is currently done at the water source and after treatment. Manitoba's drinking water quality standards apply to distributed water, and lead levels in Dauphin's public water supply is less than the current Health Canada guideline.

9. Why is lead in drinking water becoming an issue now?

The City of Dauphin is working with the Province to be proactive and is concerned about the health of its residents. Health Canada is reviewing the national guideline for lead in drinking water. The new national guideline is also expected to contain specific recommendations for testing water at the tap in homes, schools, and daycares, as opposed to testing water in the utility's distribution system. This guideline is also expected to set the acceptable level of lead in drinking water to 0.005 milligrams per litre.

10. What is the Province planning to do about lead in drinking water?

The Province has been following the Health Canada guideline review process and will be working with water system owners to implement the new guideline once it is finalized. The Province is also working to educate property owners on steps they can take to reduce their lead exposure. Fact sheets are available on the Office of Drinking Water (https://www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/odw/public-info/general-info/lead_in.html) and Government of Canada (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/programs/consultation-lead-drinking-water/document.html>) websites, and a copy has been attached for your further information.

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11. How long might there have been lead in my drinking water?

This is difficult to know for sure and depends on which of the following three factors listed below are contributing to the lead in your drinking water:

- Lead services lines – in Dauphin such service lines were installed prior to 1950 and therefore could have been contributing to lead in your drinking water for 70 years or more. The City can advise you when the lead service line on your property was installed.
- Lead in solder – lead solder in plumbing systems was used prior to 1990 and therefore could be contributing to lead in your drinking water for 28 years or more.
- Lead in brass fixtures – the contribution of lead in your drinking water from brass fixtures would depend on when they were installed.

12. Is Dauphin the only municipality with lead service lines in Manitoba?

No. Many municipalities in Manitoba and across Canada have lead service lines.

13. Is the Province going to require replacement of all lead service lines?

No. It is up to the property owner to prioritize maintenance and upgrades, including replacement of plumbing servicing the property.

14. How do I know if my home or business has a lead service line?

The City of Dauphin maintains utility records of service lines. A map showing the location of service lines that the City believes are made of lead is enclosed and is available on the City's website at www.dauphin.ca/publicworks/lead/. You can also follow the recommendations provided in these two guides to help determine if the service line on your property is made of lead:

<http://gbwater.org/media/82002/lead-pipe-identification-brochure.pdf>

<https://www.phila.gov/water/wu/Lead%20Information/HowToCheckServiceLineLead.pdf>

15. How can I work with the City of Dauphin to replace the lead service line to my property?

The property owner can contact the City of Dauphin and arrange to have the City provide a cost estimate and schedule the work. Alternatively, the property owner could hire a private contractor to have the lead service line replaced. If a private contractor is chosen, please contact the City's Public Works Department (204-622-3202) prior to the work commencing to coordinate connection to the City's watermain.

The City's "Water and Sewer Utility System Bylaw" provides that the City of Dauphin will cost-share the replacement of lead service lines for property owners, with the City paying the cost to replace the line from the watermain to the property line and the property owner paying the cost to replace it from the property line to the building.

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16. How much does it cost me to replace my lead service line?

Costs vary depending on a number of factors, with the most significant being the distance from the street to the building. However, a rough estimate from the property line to the building (which is the property owner's responsibility) would be between \$2,000 and \$5,000.

17. How do I know if my home or business has lead solder or brass fixtures?

It is recommended you talk to a plumber or a person knowledgeable about internal plumbing systems to determine whether your system has either of these potential lead contaminating sources.

18. Should I consider buying a filter or using water from an alternate source?

If you are concerned there may be lead in your drinking water, obtaining water from another source in the interim is an option. Another alternative is to purchase a water filter that is NSF-certified to reduce lead.

19. What do you mean by “water from an alternate source”?

At the property owner's discretion, drinking water could be obtained from another location, such as the drinking water truck fill station at the City Shop, a tested rural well, or local retailers that supply water in Dauphin. It is important that whichever source you consider has been tested and has been proven safe for human consumption (including lead levels below the national Health Canada guideline).

20. Where can I purchase an NSF-certified lead reducing water filter?

The City of Dauphin has confirmed that multiple retailers in Dauphin carry various types of lead reducing water filters. However, these same retailers also carry many other water filters that do not reduce lead in drinking water, so the public is urged to read labels carefully to ensure the filters are both NSF-certified AND reduce lead in drinking water.

21. What can happen if I purchase a lead reducing water filter and don't change the filter cartridge or follow the manufacturer's recommended standards?

It is very important to follow the manufacturer's recommended standards and change the filter cartridge according to those standards. Failure to do so may result in increased lead levels in your drinking water.

22. Is it safe to shower or bathe in water with elevated lead levels?

Yes, you can shower and bathe in water with increased lead levels. Lead from drinking water is not absorbed very well through the skin, and very little is likely to be inhaled through water spray.

23. Can water with elevated lead levels be used for cooking?

Boiling water will not remove lead. Use water from a tap with a filter that is NSF-certified to reduce lead or use alternate safe water for cooking.

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24. Can water with an elevated lead level be used to brush my teeth?

Drinking water with an elevated lead level increases lead exposure. Use water from a tap with a filter that is NSF-certified to reduce lead or use alternate safe water for brushing teeth. This is particularly important for children since they are more likely to swallow the water and are more sensitive to lead exposure.

25. Are other communities in Manitoba doing anything about lead in drinking water?

Winnipeg, Brandon, and Portage la Prairie have done some work to address lead levels in drinking water. Dauphin proactively contacted the Province about testing for lead in drinking water at the tap in advance of the implementation of the proposed national drinking water guideline changes.

26. Will the City of Dauphin provide water testing to check lead levels in my drinking water?

The City of Dauphin will provide free testing for lead levels in drinking water for those properties with lead service lines. Any property without a lead service line that would like their water tested for lead will be responsible to pay the independent laboratory's cost to complete the test, which is estimated at \$50. In both cases, the lab test results will be sent directly to the property owner, with a copy to the City of Dauphin and the Province of Manitoba – Office of Drinking Water for information purposes. More information regarding water testing for lead is also enclosed and is available on the City's website.

27. How prevalent or widespread is the lead issue in Dauphin?

The City's records show that 445 properties have lead service lines (out of a total of approximately 3,500), however all homes and businesses constructed prior to 1990 likely had lead solder used in the plumbing systems and may also have brass fixtures containing lead. To determine how pervasive this issue is within the community, the City of Dauphin will be conducting additional random testing of homes and businesses in late spring/early summer. The results of this testing will provide the City and Province with more information on this issue.

28. If lead solder was approved for use up to 1989 in the Manitoba Building Code, and brass fittings were also used for decades, won't this issue affect most of Manitoba and Canada?

Yes. The City believes most Manitoba communities and water systems will be affected, along with many across Canada.

29. Whose responsibility is it to remove lead from my drinking water?

The water being produced by the City of Dauphin does not contain any measurable amount of lead. It is the property owner's responsibility to ensure the drinking water from their tap has lead levels below national standards. If you are a tenant, we recommend you contact your landlord.

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30. Will I get a reduction in my water bill if testing proves lead levels are elevated?

No. The water produced at Dauphin's Water Treatment Plant does not contain any measurable amount of lead. Lead is introduced into the water while it is in the service lines and/or while it is in the pipes/fixtures in your property. The Public Utilities Board regulates the City of Dauphin's utility rates and does not provide for such a reduction.

31. Where can I get more information on lead in drinking water?

The Province of Manitoba has produced a document entitled, "Lead in Manitoba Water Supplies" (September 2016), which provides factual information and can be viewed at the following link:

https://www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/odw/public-info/fact_sheets/factsheet_lead.pdf

Health Canada also has information on reducing lead in drinking water, which can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/reports-publications/water-quality/water-talk-minimizing-exposure-lead-drinking-water-distribution-systems.html>

If you have questions pertaining to Dauphin's water system, please contact:

City of Dauphin (Utility)
204-622-3212
water@dauphin.ca

If you have questions regarding the regulation of drinking water in Manitoba, please contact:

Manitoba Sustainable Development (Office of Drinking Water)
Toll-free at 1-800-214-6497
ODW@gov.mb.ca

For health-related questions on lead or information on lead exposure reduction strategies, call Health Links/Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or toll free at 1-888-315-9257.

For questions or concerns about lead exposure and your health, speak with your health care provider.

For further information on lead exposure, please see the Provincial fact sheet on lead:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/lead.html>.