Stoughton Utilities

Reducing Your Lead Risk

Lead is a naturally occurring metal that can be toxic to humans and animals if ingested. Some materials in your home's interior plumbing, including pipes, solder, and fixtures, could contain traces of lead. Stoughton's water does not have lead present when it leaves our wells, but it can become contaminated as it travels through these plumbing materials. Due to changes in laws pertaining to plumbing materials, homes that were built prior to 1986 are more likely to have plumbing components that contain higher levels of lead. Plumbing fixtures produced before 2013 may also contain high levels of lead.

When your water sits for long periods of time inside water pipes and fixtures containing lead, some of the lead can dissolve into the water. There are a number of steps you can take to ensure that your water remains safe to drink.

Cleaning Faucet Aerators

Cleaning your faucet aerators regularly is an important part of maintaining the safety of your drinking water.

What is a faucet aerator?
An aerator is a device that is attached to the end of your faucet. Aerators help to save water and filter out sediment and large particles that can be picked up while your water moves through the distribution system, or from your interior plumbing materials corroding over time. Small lead particles could be caught in the aerator depending on your home's plumbing materials.

How often should you clean your aerators?
Faucet aerators should be cleaned every 6 months to remove any sediment and buildup. If you recently replaced lead pipes or fixtures, you may want to clean them immediately, and then periodically going forward.

Aerators should also be replaced once a year. Replacements can be purchased at your local hardware store.

How to Clean Your Aerators

Before you get started, gather the following supplies:

- Rag
- Masking Tape
- Wrench or Pliers
- Old toothbrush
- White vinegar
- Small plastic bowl

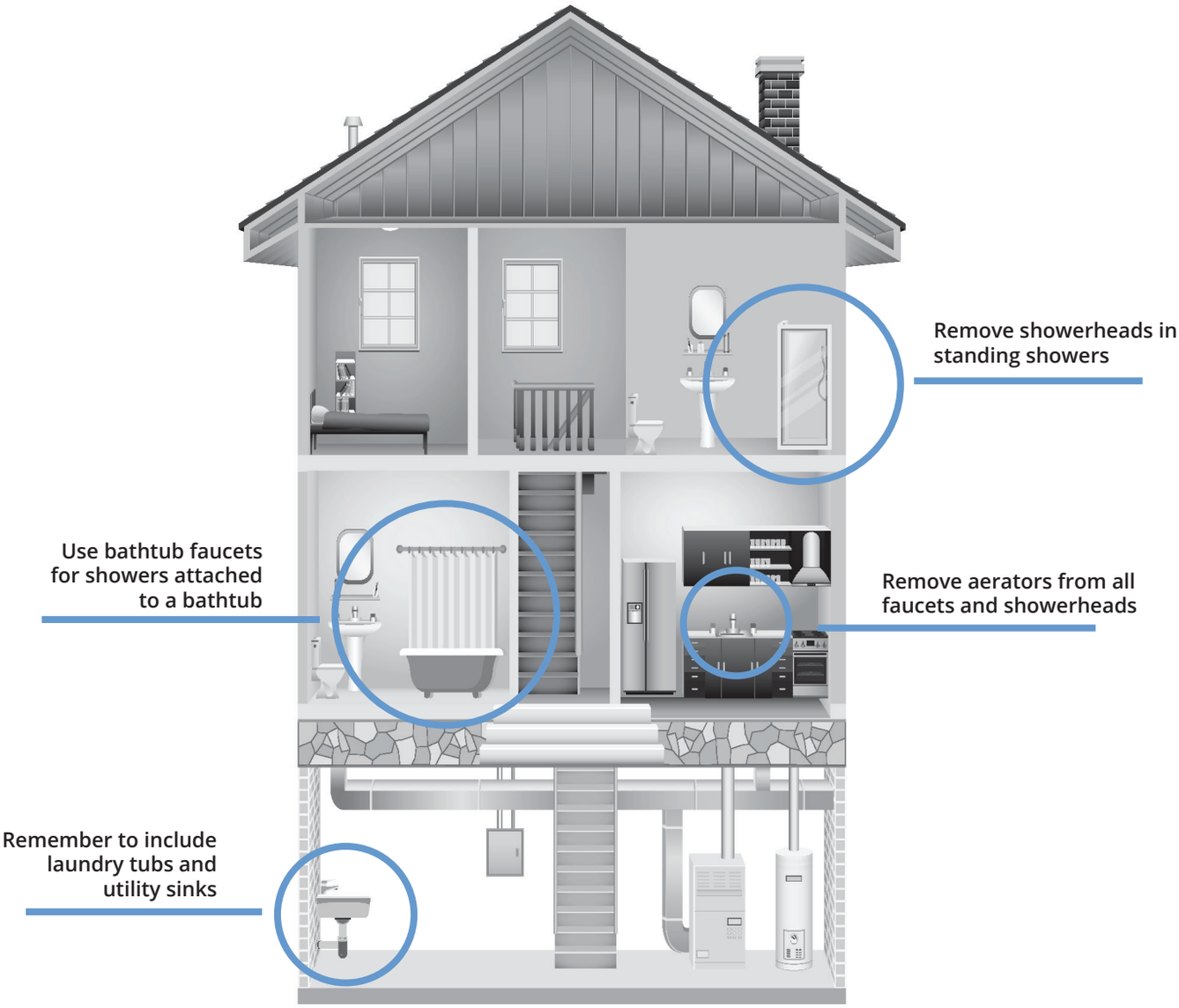
Follow these steps to clean your faucet aerators:

- ☐ Place a rag over the sink drain to prevent any of the pieces from going down the drain.
- ☐ If using a wrench or pliers, wrap masking tape around the aerator to prevent damage and scratches.
- ☐ Unscrew the aerator by turning counter-clockwise and separate each part (aerator housing, aerator, and rubber washer).
- ☐ Clean the parts by removing any pieces of sediment or debris. Soak the parts in white vinegar for a few minutes to remove mineral buildup. Scrub with a toothbrush if necessary.
- ☐ If aerator and rubber washer are in poor condition, consider replacing them. Parts can be purchased at your local hardware store.
- ☐ Put the aerator parts back together and screw the aerator back on the faucet.
- ☐ Repeat these steps for all faucets.

Please note, some faucets have hidden aerators. If you can't easily locate the aerator on your faucet, follow the manufacturer's instructions. If you have a water filter attached to your faucet, you will not have an aerator.

Flush Your Indoor Plumbing

After having the lead service line replaced at your home, small amounts of lead from your old service line may remain in the pipes in your house. To remove this lead, you should flush your home's plumbing thoroughly. Make sure to use cold water only.



How to Flush Your Indoor Plumbing

Follow these steps to flush your home's interior plumbing.

- ☐ Locate all of the water faucets in the house where you can run the water without the sink or tub overflowing. Be sure to include laundry tubs and utility sinks. For showers attached to bathtubs, use the bathtub faucet. For showers not attached to bathtubs, remove the showerhead if possible.
- ☐ Remove aerators from faucets and showerheads.
- ☐ Turn on the cold water faucet all the way, starting in the basement or lowest floor of your home. Leave water running from all faucets at the highest rate possible. Repeat on each floor of your home, moving from the basement up, until all faucets are on.
- ☐ Let the water run from all faucets for 30 minutes.
- ☐ After 30 minutes, start in the basement or lowest floor of your house and turn off all faucets in the order in which they were opened.
- ☐ Clean the aerators and/or showerheads, and put them back on each faucet. Replace old, worn aerators as necessary.

Next Steps

• Check your plumbing fixtures
Certified lead free fixtures will include a certification mark either on the packaging or engraved into the fixture. Visit www.epa.gov/lead for more information on lead free certification. Replace fixtures that are not lead free certified with new fixtures manufactured after 2013.

• Have your water tested
You can request a test kit to have the water at your home tested for contaminants, including lead. Please contact a certified laboratory to request a test kit. Several options are provided here (right).

To have the water tested at your home, you may contact one of the following certified laboratories in the area:

Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene
(800) 442-4618

Northern Lake Service, Inc
(715) 478-2777

• Contact a plumber
A certified plumber can help you determine if any of your home's fixtures, pipe fittings, or solder contain lead, and if they should be replaced with lead free materials.

Tips

If you determine that you still have components in your home's drinking water system that contain lead, consider the following tips to minimize your families exposure.

•Use cold water for drinking and cooking
Do not drink or cook with hot tap water. Hot water can dissolve lead more quickly than cold water. Lead is not absorbed through the skin, so washing your hands and bathing with hot water is safe.

• Let the water run
Let the cold water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water has gone unused for more than 4 hours.

•Use a filtration system
Purchase a faucet mounted filtration system to filter your water before drinking or cooking with it. Filtration systems must be certified to ensure that they will remove lead from the water. You can also purchase filtered water pitchers that will filter lead out of your drinking water. Visit www.nsf.org for more information.

•Eat a healthy diet
Foods rich in iron help to protect the body from the harmful effects of lead, while foods rich in calcium and vitamin C help to reduce lead absorption.

• Talk to your doctor
If there are children in the home, you may want to have their doctor test their blood for lead. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that action be taken when the level of lead in a child's blood exceeds 5 micrograms per deciliter.

Other Sources of Lead

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that between 10 - 20% of lead exposure comes from drinking water while the majority comes from other sources around the house and in the environment.

Lead is a naturally occurring metal that can be toxic to humans and animals if ingested. It can be found in the air, soil, water, and inside of our homes. Lead has been used in many products found around the home in the forms of paint, ceramics, plumbing materials, gasoline, batteries, and cosmetics. When lead is released into the air, it can travel long distances before settling to the ground.

To learn more about reducing lead exposure around your home or business, please visit the EPA's website at www.epa.gov/lead.

Stoughton Utilities
600 South Fourth Street
P.O.Box 383
Stoughton, WI 53589

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In 2021, Stoughton Utilities replaced all of the known lead water service lines in the city. Although the water lines going into your home are now lead free, your home's interior plumbing could still have traces of lead or use materials containing lead. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially in children and pregnant women.

The following pages include ways for you to continue to keep your drinking water safe and reduce your families exposure to lead.