

## Lead in drinking water

There are a variety of sources of lead in our environment. There has been much concern over the potential effect of lead on health, and action is being taken to reduce the variety of ways in which it can enter the body. One source can be from drinking water.

Lead in drinking water comes from old lead pipes and from some solders used to joint copper pipework; there is virtually no lead in any of the water leaving our treatment works. Although the amount of lead in water is very small (normally less than one tenth of a part of lead per million parts of water), lead accumulates in the body and can damage the nervous system.

The World Health Organisation has advised that to give the best protection to babies and small children, lead in drinking water should be less than 10 microgrammes per litre.

In Britain the current limit for lead is 25 microgrammes per litre. However revisions to drinking water regulations mean that by the end of 2013 the new limit will be 10 microgrammes per litre.

Treatment has been installed at many of our water treatment works which will help Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water comply with the standard. More investment will be required if Welsh Water is to achieve the level of protection now recommended by the World Health Organisation at 10 microgrammes per litre.

Replacement of lead pipework is another option that can help in achieving the revised limit. Welsh Water has a policy to replace lead pipes as and when identified, but lead pipework in the customer's house is the responsibility of the householder. Welsh Water can offer advice and encouragement on lead pipe replacement.

Where there is lead plumbing it is possible to reduce lead levels considerably by running the water for a short period of time at the tap. This is because lead levels may rise when water is standing in lead pipes. If you have lead plumbing you should run water from the cold tap used for drinking water for about two minutes first thing in the morning, or after periods of absence from your home, before using the water for drinking or cooking.

Welsh Water also offers a free service to test the tap water in any house to ensure that the lead levels are satisfactory. In addition, we replace any lead communication pipes which are our responsibility whenever we can, and always when you replace the lead pipework serving your property.

Further advice on the use of acceptable solders and fluxes can be obtained from WRAS (Water Regulations Advisory Scheme) on **01495 248 454** or via their website **[www.wras.co.uk](http://www.wras.co.uk)**.

Should you require further information call us on **0800 052 0130**.