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TIPS for HOMEOWNERS #7
LEAD IN WATER

1. When should you test for lead in water?

Lead gets into drinking water by being leached out of the plumbing lines that the water travels through. The water supplied by a community water supplier or by a private well seldom, if ever, contains lead. It is the water supply lines that can introduce lead into your drinking water. You should be concerned about the possibility that your water may contain lead if:

- your home or water system has lead pipes, or
- your home has copper pipes with lead solder joints, and you have acidic and/or very soft water
- you have faucets or pump fittings made of brass
- you have water pipes that were manufactured prior to the 1930's
- the home is less than five years old (pipes build up a protective coating over time)

2. Can lead in water raise blood lead levels?

Yes. The EPA estimates that lead in water causes 10-20% of overall childhood lead exposure. Young children and unborn babies of pregnant women are the most likely to be adversely affected.

3. Who should test your water for lead?

Any EPA-certified laboratory. Fredericktowne Labs will test your water for lead for \$24.00. It is important that the sample tested is a "first draw" sample. A first draw sample is one taken after six to eighteen hours of no water use from the tap tested.

4. What is considered a safe lead level?

The EPA considers water acceptable for drinking if it has less than 15 parts per billion of lead, although some doctors and advocacy groups call for levels of less than 10 parts per billion.

5. What can I do if my water has an unacceptable lead level?

- Reduce risk by running the faucet for a minute before using water.
- When washing or cooking vegetables, use cold water which is less likely to pick up lead from pipes.
- Consider installing an acid neutralizer if your water is too acidic.
- Try to locate and have replaced any offending parts of the plumbing system.
- If all else fails, consider installing a filtering system that has been demonstrated to be effective at removing lead. Many filtering systems are not useful for removing lead. **(Check product information carefully.)** A water softener can make matters worse since it will increase the corrosivity of the water.

6. Are there any containers that should be avoided?

Don't store liquids that will be consumed in lead crystal. Be cautious about older glazed pottery, particularly pieces that were made in a foreign country.

TESTING BY AN INDEPENDENT LAB IS THE ONLY WAY TO BE SURE!