

## FAQ

### DETECTION

#### [Q1. What is a lead water service line?](#)

A water service line is a conduit having a small diameter (usually less than 2 inches) that connects a building to the water main located beneath the road. It is generally made of either lead or copper.

The water service line is made up of two sections, one belonging to the city and the other to the building owner. The shutoff valve located outside, generally on the property line, identifies this separation. Both portions may be made of lead, but it is possible for one of them not to contain lead, while the other does.

#### [Q2. How do I know if my building has a lead water service line?](#)

If you live in a building containing eight dwelling units or fewer that was constructed before 1970, there is about a 50 per cent chance that all or part of your water service line is made of lead. According to a statistical survey carried out by the city, it is highly unlikely that this is the case for water service lines in buildings that do not meet these criteria.

To check if you have lead piping, find the water service line, and look at the pipe. Lead is grey, does not resonate if you tap it and leaves metal-coloured marks when scratched. As well, it does not attract magnets. You can also have your tap water tested for lead.

See the video in the section Avez-vous une entrée en plomb? (In French)

#### [Q3. How does the city identify whether a building has a lead water service line?](#)

In 2010, the city developed a fast detection protocol in collaboration with the NSERC Industrial Chair on Drinking Water – Polytechnique Montréal. A city agent conducts analyses in each building that might have a lead water service line, using a device that measures lead concentration in real time (Palintest). This device was developed to confirm whether you have a lead water service line.

#### [Q4. Who can carry out my water analysis?](#)

By 2023, Montréal will accelerate its screening program in order to visit all buildings within city limits that could potentially have a lead water service line. The test will confirm the presence of lead, but does not constitute a formal analysis carried out by an accredited lab.

#### **Q5. How will I be informed of the lead detection results?**

A city representative hands a written notice to all residents of inspected buildings, regardless of whether lead was found or not.

The results are also incorporated into the online map every year.

#### **Q6. How do I recognize a city representative?**

All city representatives will be clearly identified by means of an ID card and clothing with the Montréal logo.

### **FILTER DISTRIBUTION**

#### **Q1. Does the city distribute filtration devices to residents?**

Yes, since 2020, the city has provided a filtration device and four (4) filters when a test conducted after October 23, 2019, confirms the presence of a lead water service line. Furthermore, at-risk individuals (pregnant women or parents of a child under the age of 6) with low incomes and living in a dwelling that may have a lead service line can call 311 to see if they also qualify for a free water-filter pitcher.

#### **Q2. I made a mistake filling out my form to request a pitcher. What should I do?**

People who find an error in their form to request a pitcher should write to [plomb@montreal.ca](mailto:plomb@montreal.ca) to report it.

#### **Q3. What should I do if I can't access the form?**

Write to [plomb@montreal.ca](mailto:plomb@montreal.ca).

#### **Q4. I haven't received my pitcher and I sent my request form over four (4) weeks ago. Is this normal?**

Delivery usually takes four (4) weeks. However, it could take longer due to a high volume of requests.

**[Q5. My neighbour also needs to fill out a pitcher request form. Can I give them the Web address?](#)**

All people who are eligible for the free pitcher program must have received a test result in their mailbox. If your neighbour has not received one, it's because they are not eligible.

**[Q6. If city testing done before October 2019 confirmed a lead water service line, can I get a pitcher?](#)**

No. Occupants of a building that tested positive prior to October 23, 2019, received instructions to reduce their lead exposure and should already have purchased a filtration device.

**[Q7. How can I confirm whether my filtration device is certified for lead reduction in accordance with NSF/ANSI standard 53?](#)**

You can confirm whether your filtration device is certified for lead reduction in accordance with NSF/ANSI standard 53 by checking the following websites:

[info.nsf.org/Certified/DWTU/listings\\_leadreduction.asp](http://info.nsf.org/Certified/DWTU/listings_leadreduction.asp)

[wqa.org/find-products#/keyword/?claims=46](http://wqa.org/find-products#/keyword/?claims=46)

[pld.iapmo.org/](http://pld.iapmo.org/)

[iq.ulprospector.com/info/](http://iq.ulprospector.com/info/)

[www.csagroup.org](http://www.csagroup.org)

**[Q8. Has the city authorized door-to-door sales of filtration devices by any business to reduce lead exposure?](#)**

No, the city has not authorized any businesses to do door-to-door solicitation or sales of such devices.

### [Q9. Where can I get new filter cartridges?](#)

You can buy replacement filter cartridges from Québec big box stores, or check the manufacturer's website for more information. Replacement cartridges should be NSF/ANSI standard 53 certified and indicate that they capture lead.

### [Q10. I just moved into a dwelling with a lead water service line. Can I get a pitcher?](#)

The city provides one pitcher per dwelling. If a pitcher has already been delivered to your address, you cannot get another pitcher.

### [Q11. Where can I recycle my pitcher filters?](#)

For the time being, there isn't a local solution for returning filters, and ecocentres do not recycle them. The Service de l'eau is currently working with the city's Service de l'environnement to find a solution for recycling the filters provided with pitchers.

## **USING WATER WHERE SERVICE LINES ARE MADE OF LEAD**

### [Q1. What should I do if my building is connected through a lead water service line?](#)

To reduce exposure to lead in your tap water and minimize your risk:

1. Use a water filter pitcher, a tap filter or a pipe filter under your sink. These devices must be certified for lead reduction in accordance with NSF/ANSI standard 53, and the manufacturer's installation and maintenance instructions must be followed carefully.
2. Use a filter until your entire service line is fully replaced.
3. Make the following measures part of your daily routine:
  - a. Before drinking tap water, let it run for a few minutes.
  - b. Wait for it to become cold (or cool in summer), especially if it has stagnated several hours in the pipes (in the morning or when you return from work).
  - c. Always use cold water to cook (coffee, tea, water used to boil vegetables, pasta or rice, etc.).
  - d. Clean your tap aerator (screen) regularly.

Boiling water has no effect on its lead content. Lead does not evaporate and cannot be destroyed by boiling.

If you own a building with the private portion of the water service line made of lead, have it replaced. Under By-law 20-030 governing connections to the public waterworks and sewer systems and stormwater management, water service lines must be replaced if they are made of lead or a material that is or has been in contact with lead. We recommend that you request quotes from at least three certified contractors. Owners must apply for a permit at their borough office before having the work done.

### **Q2. Can I drink my tap water or use it for cooking if my building has a lead water service line?**

To reduce exposure to lead in your tap water and minimize your risk:

1. Use a water filter pitcher, a tap filter or a pipe filter under your sink. These devices must be certified for lead reduction in accordance with NSF/ANSI standard 53, and the manufacturer's installation and maintenance instructions must be followed carefully.
2. Use a filter until your entire service line is fully replaced.
3. Make the following measures part of your daily routine:
  - a. Before drinking tap water, let it run for a few minutes.
  - b. Wait for it to become cold (or cool in summer), especially if it has stagnated for several hours in the pipes (in the morning or when you return from work).
  - c. Always use cold water to cook (coffee, tea, water used to boil vegetables, pasta or rice, etc.).
  - d. Clean your tap aerator (screen) regularly.

Boiling water has no effect on its lead content. Lead does not evaporate and cannot be destroyed by boiling.

### **Q3. I am a tenant in a building serviced through a lead water service line. What should I do?**

To reduce exposure to lead in your tap water and minimize your risk:

1. Use a water filter pitcher, a tap filter or a pipe filter under your sink. These devices must be certified for lead reduction in accordance with NSF/ANSI standard 53, and

the manufacturer's installation and maintenance instructions must be followed carefully.

2. Use a filter until your entire service line is replaced.
3. Make the following measures part of your daily routine:
  - a. Before drinking tap water, let it run for a few minutes.
  - b. Wait for it to become cold (or cool in summer), especially if it has stagnated for several hours in the pipes (in the morning or when you return from work).
  - c. Always use cold water to cook (coffee, tea, water used to boil vegetables, pasta or rice, etc.).
  - d. Clean your tap aerator (screen) regularly.

Boiling water has no effect on its lead content. Lead does not evaporate and cannot be destroyed by boiling.

The city recommends that tenants of buildings that have been tested for the presence of lead notify their landlord.

#### **[Q4. If I boil my tap water, will this get rid of lead?](#)**

No, boiling water has no effect on its lead content. Lead does not evaporate and cannot be destroyed by boiling.

#### **[Q5. Should I be concerned about the quality of drinking water?](#)**

The drinking water produced and distributed by the city's water supply system is of excellent quality. However, some buildings have water service lines that are made of lead. The lead can dissolve into the water, especially after extended periods of stagnation. In this situation, the level of lead in the tap water may be greater than the regulatory threshold.

### **I GOT A LETTER**

#### **[Q1. I got a letter from the city about lead water service lines. What should I do?](#)**

If you got a letter with information about this problem, you live in a building that might be connected through a lead water service line.

Check the lead water service line map at [ville.montreal.qc.ca/lead](http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/lead) to learn whether your building is affected.

To reduce exposure to lead in your tap water and minimize your risk:

1. Use a water filter pitcher, a tap filter or a pipe filter under your sink. These devices must be certified for lead reduction in accordance with NSF/ANSI standard 53, and the manufacturer's installation and maintenance instructions must be followed carefully.
2. Use a filter until your entire service line is replaced.
3. Make the following measures part of your daily routine:
  - a. Before drinking tap water, let it run for a few minutes.
  - b. Wait for it to become cold (or cool in summer), especially if it has stagnated for several hours in the pipes (in the morning or when you return from work).
  - c. Always use cold water to cook (coffee, tea, water used to boil vegetables, pasta or rice, etc.).
  - d. Clean your tap aerator (screen) regularly.

Boiling water has no effect on its lead content. Lead does not evaporate and cannot be destroyed by boiling.

Under By-law 20-030 governing connections to the public waterworks and sewer systems and stormwater management, water service lines must be replaced if they are made of lead or a material that is or has been in contact with lead. We recommend that you request quotes from at least three certified contractors. Owners must apply for a permit at their borough office before having the work done.

## **[Q2. My neighbour received a letter from the city, but I didn't. Should I be concerned?](#)**

No. There are three reasons you may not have received a letter:

1. Your building does not meet the criteria making it possible that a lead water service line is present.
2. The water service line has already been replaced.
3. Your water has already been analyzed by the city, and no lead was detected.

## **LEAD AND YOUR HEALTH**

### **[Q1. Is lead only found in drinking water?](#)**

Due to its natural presence everywhere, and to its widespread use in consumer goods, lead is present throughout our living environment. Lead is found in food, air, soil and dust. We are all exposed to small quantities of lead that are absorbed and distributed in our body, particularly in our blood, bones and certain tissues.

Still, nowadays, we are much less frequently exposed to lead than we were in the past. In recent decades, the application of increasingly stringent standards has led to the elimination of almost all lead in gasoline, food cans, paint, plumbing solder and other materials.

### **Q2. What are the health risks?**

If you would like more information about health concerns, we suggest you contact:

Info-Santé 811

<https://santemontreal.qc.ca/en/public/advice-and-prevention/lead-in-drinking-water/>

### **Q3. Whom can I contact if I'm worried about my health or that of a loved one?**

If you would like more information about health concerns, we suggest you contact:

Info-Santé 811

<https://santemontreal.qc.ca/en/public/advice-and-prevention/lead-in-drinking-water/>

## **LEAD WATER SERVICE LINES IN MONTRÉAL**

### **Q1. Where in Montréal are the buildings with a lead water service line located?**

The city estimates that lead water service lines are present in 16 out of 19 boroughs. It is very unlikely to find any in the boroughs of L'Île-Bizard-Sainte-Geneviève, Pierrefonds-Roxboro and Saint-Léonard. Everywhere else, it is possible to find lead water service lines.

### **Q2. Is Montréal the only municipality affected?**

No, many cities across Québec and elsewhere are faced with this problem, including the United States and Europe. According to the "Québec Drinking Water Quality Report"



published by Québec's Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques (MELCC), 55 municipalities reported lead concentrations exceeding provincial lead standards in 2014.

### **Q3. What is Montréal doing to fix the problem of lead water service lines?**

In 2019, the city reviewed its action plan to eliminate all lead water service lines within city limits by 2032. The action plan includes the following six measures:

1. Provide an online map for residents to obtain information about the possible presence of lead in their building.
2. Accelerate lead detection operations to identify all lead water service lines across the territory. The city will analyze tap water in some 100,000 buildings by 2023. Priority will be given to buildings housing family daycares and early childhood education centres (CPE), single family homes, duplexes and triplexes.
3. Starting in 2020, distribute a filtration device at the time a lead service line is detected.
4. Continue to accelerate the replacement of lead service lines on public property. The city will have replaced all lead service lines by 2032, i.e. approximately 48,000 service lines.
5. Make it mandatory to replace the private portion of a lead water service line. Starting in 2021, once work is planned, if the private portion is still made of lead, the city will replace it at the same time as the public portion, at the owners' expense.
6. Prioritize the replacement of lead water service lines in wartime housing-type buildings, single-family homes, duplexes and triplexes.

The city is continuing its awareness campaigns for residents affected by the issue of lead water service lines.

## **REPLACEMENT OF LEAD WATER SERVICE LINES**

### **Q1. Who will replace the lead service line?**

Public portion (from the water main to the property line)

This section is replaced by the city at no charge to owners when water mains are restored or reconstructed, or during road reconstruction, work planned by the city each year.

Private portion (from the property line to the interior shut-off valve)

As of 2021, under By-law 20-030 governing connections to the public waterworks and sewer systems and stormwater management, when work to replace lead service lines is planned on public property, the city replaces the private portion at the same time if it is made of lead or a material that is or has been in contact with lead.

As an owner, you always have the option of carrying out the work with the contractor of your choice. You can do this before the city arrives on your street. This way, you can look for contractors (we recommend getting quotes from three certified contractors) and can choose the contractor and a suitable time for the work to be done.

### **Q2. How should I go about having the private portion of my lead service line replaced?**

If you would like to have the private portion of your lead water service line replaced, you will have to contact your borough office, where you will be told how to proceed (for example, getting an excavation permit). Then you will need to find a contractor who is qualified to do the work.

### **Q3. How much will it cost the owner if the private portion of the lead water service line is replaced by the city?**

The invoiced amount may vary depending on the length of the service line and on the obstacles hindering the work inside or in front of the house. The city currently estimates the average cost to be about \$6,000.

The owner may pay their invoice to the city upon receipt or spread it out over a period of 15 years. The interest rate and administration fees will be based on the city's borrowing rate. This amount will be associated with the building and passed on to the next owner if the building is sold.

### **Q4. Will it be less expensive for the owner if the city carries out the work on their private portion?**

No, it will not necessarily cost less, because the city will establish a fair price based on market conditions.

The city recommends that owners do the work themselves before the city comes to replace the private portion.

**[Q5. Is there a subsidy or financial support for owners who have to replace the private portion of their lead service line?](#)**

If you are planning substantial renovations, the [RénoPlex](#) and [Affordable housing reno](#) subsidy programs include financial assistance for replacing water service lines.

\*The RénoPlex subsidy program has been so successful that the city has had to suspend the submission of applications. This temporary suspension took effect on July 23, 2021 at 5 p.m. All files received before then will be processed. It will be possible to apply again in January 2022.

**[Q6. If I replace the private portion of my lead water service line before municipal work is carried out, can the city replace the public portion quickly?](#)**

If you would like the city to replace your water service line sooner, please complete the following request form: [formulaire de demande de remplacement d'entrée d'eau en plomb](#) (in French). We will review the request as soon as possible, and a city employee will contact you when the time comes.

**[Q7. What can the city do if the owner refuses to change their private portion in order to avoid paying?](#)**

Penalties are provided for in By-law 20-030, and tickets will be issued. Depending on the situation, fines of between \$500 and \$2,000 for an individual and between \$1,000 and \$4,000 for a corporation may be given out.

If an owner refuses to coordinate with the city, they still have the regulatory obligation to replace the private portion of the water service connection. They will need to have the work done within 24 months of receiving a notice from the city in order to comply with the by-law and avoid committing a violation.

**Q8. If the city replaces a building's lead service line, does this mean that there will be no more lead in the drinking water consumed by that building's residents?**

The main source of lead will have been eliminated. However, there are other potential sources of lead in a building, such as materials used in the faucets and solder. However, lead exposure due to those components is lower than the exposure caused by lead service lines. Letting your tap water run until it is cold is an effective way of eliminating lead from other components.

**Q9. Will you be replacing the private portion of service lines in homes where the public portion was replaced prior to 2021, but whose owner has failed to change their portion?**

No. If the city changed the public portion of a service line prior to 2021, the owner is obligated to replace the private portion themselves, at their expense.

Note: the city will sample the water of these buildings to confirm the presence of lead. A written notice will be sent to owners to inform them of their obligation to replace the water service line.