Are You and Your Child at Risk for Lead Poisoning?

You are at Risk for Lead Poisoning from Old Metal Pipes If:

1) Your home has existing plumbing from 1988 or earlier, and
2) You get your water from a private water source such as a spring, well and most surface water.

Lead Poisoning can Cause Serious Problems

Brain Damage	Hearing and Vision Issues	Miscarriages
Reduced IQ	High Blood Pressure	Premature Births
Behavior and Learning Issues	Kidney and Liver Damage	Low Birth Weights

High levels of lead can cause seizure, coma or death. Lead builds up in the bloodstream and is stored in bones. Higher lead levels cause greater damage, but no level is safe. Infants, young children and pregnant women have the highest health risks. A blood test ordered by a medical provider can determine lead levels.

Lead Exposure

In buildings with lead paint (banned after 1978), children may be exposed to lead through household dust or eating paint chips. However, most infant lead exposure is from baby formula or baby food prepared with lead-contaminated drinking water. Until the 1930s, lead was used for water pipes. As late as 1988, lead solder and flux were still legally used to connect metal pipes and fixtures. Even today's "lead free" brass faucets and fittings contain up to 8% lead.

Surface water and shallow ground water around Coos County tend to have acidic pH. The acidity increases the leaching of any lead present in a plumbing system, into the water.

See the other side of this flyer to learn how to reduce your lead exposure.

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Reduce the Risk

If the piping in your home's water system may contain lead, take these two steps to reduce your exposure.

1) Do not drink or cook with water that has been in metal pipes for 6 hours or longer. Before using water for drinking or food preparation, "flush" the metal plumbing. To do this, flush water from the pipes by running water from the cold water faucet until it feels as cold as it will get. How long this takes depends on the plumbing system, but in any system the water should run at least 1 minute. It can take 2 or 3 minutes or longer.

   Any faucet that will provide water for drinking or cooking should be flushed. To reduce the number of times you flush a line, keep a container of drinking water in the refrigerator.

2) Use only water from a cold water faucet for drinking and food preparation. This is especially important when you are making baby formula or baby food. Hot water dissolves lead more quickly than cold. Boiling will not remove lead from water. If you need hot water, heat up water from a cold water faucet.

For additional information on this or other sources of lead poisoning, visit the Oregon Lead Poisoning Prevention Program's website at public.health.oregon.gov/HEALTHYENVIRONMENTS/HEALTHYNEIGHBORHOODS/HEALTHYHOMES/LEADPOISONING, or the Environmental Protection Agency's website at epa.gov/lead.

You may also call the Oregon Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 1-877-290-6767, the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791, or the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-LEAD.

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