

# Health Advice on Lead in Drinking Water



## What is lead?

- Lead is a naturally occurring heavy metal which usually presents in a very small quantity in the environment.
- In everyday life, lead is found everywhere and exposure seems inevitable. Notwithstanding this, it is always good for health to achieve the lowest possible lead level in the body.



## Health effects of lead

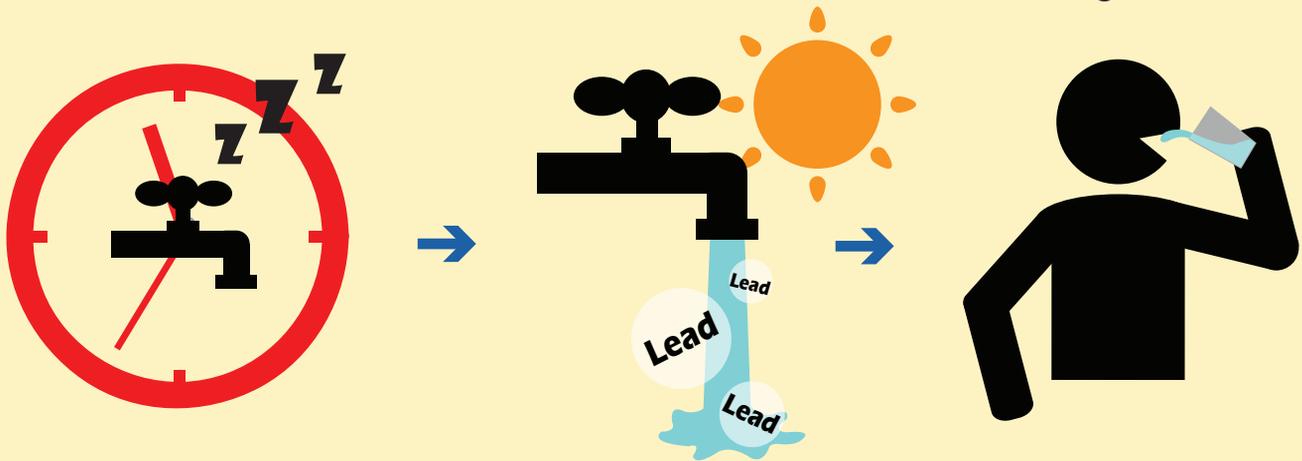
- Lead can enter the human body by ingestion, inhalation and skin absorption.
- When lead is absorbed into the body in excessive amount, it is toxic to many organs and systems. Depending on the lead level inside the body, significant exposure to lead is associated with a wide range of effects, including neurodevelopmental effects, anaemia, high blood pressure, gastrointestinal symptoms, impaired renal function, neurological impairment, impaired fertility and adverse pregnancy outcomes.
- Infants, young children under six, pregnant women and lactating mothers are more likely to be affected by its adverse effects.



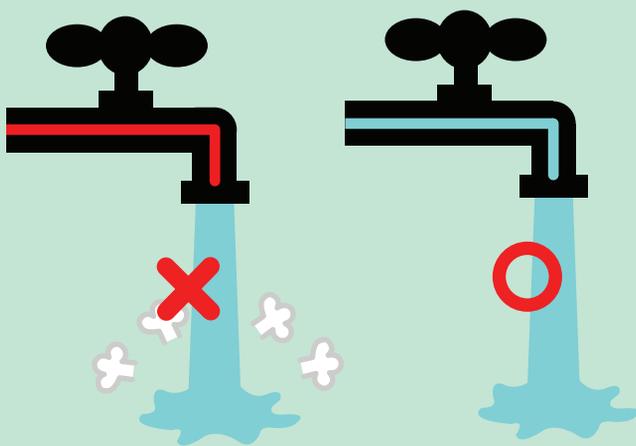
# How to reduce the risk of lead exposure



1. Run tap water for two to three minutes if the plumbing system has not been used for some time, for instance, after several hours or overnight.



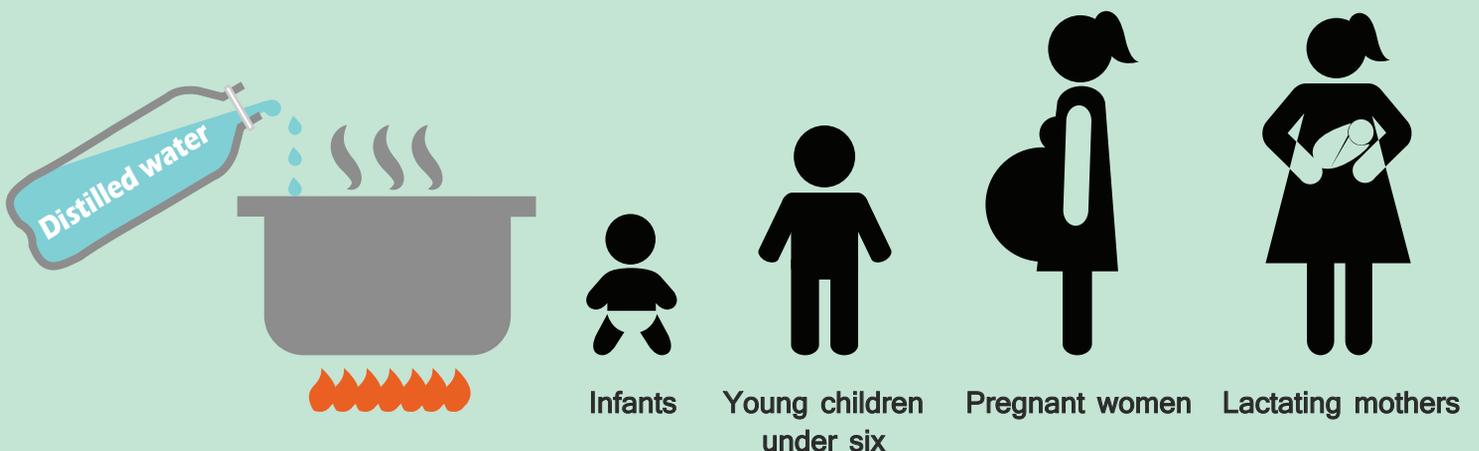
2. Hot water increases the amount of lead that may leach from pipe materials. Using tap water for purpose other than drinking and cooking.



3. Absorption of inorganic lead via skin is not effective. Using water for purpose other than drinking should not pose any health threat.



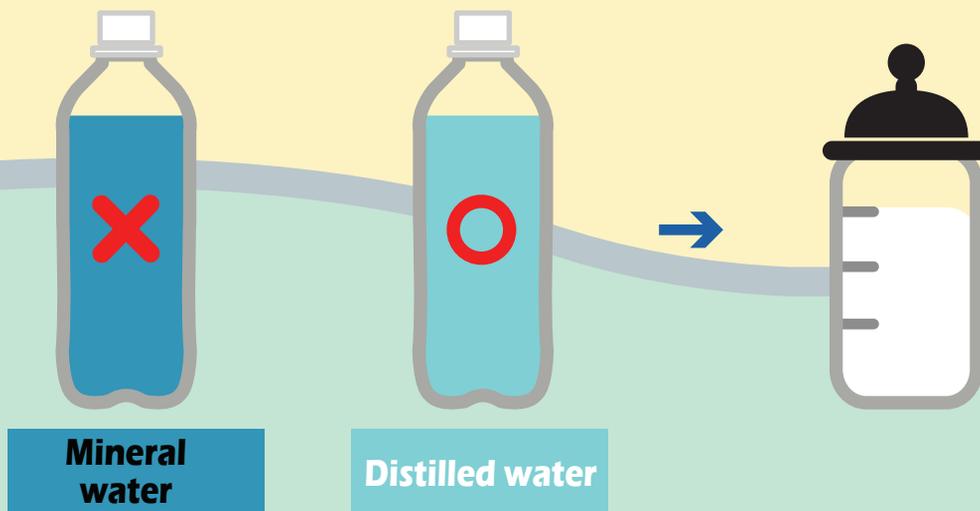
4. It will be preferable for the following groups of people to use alternative sources of drinking water such as distilled water for cooking and drinking.



5. It is safe to use distilled water to substitute tap water in preparing formula milk. Distilled water should be boiled when preparing formula milk.



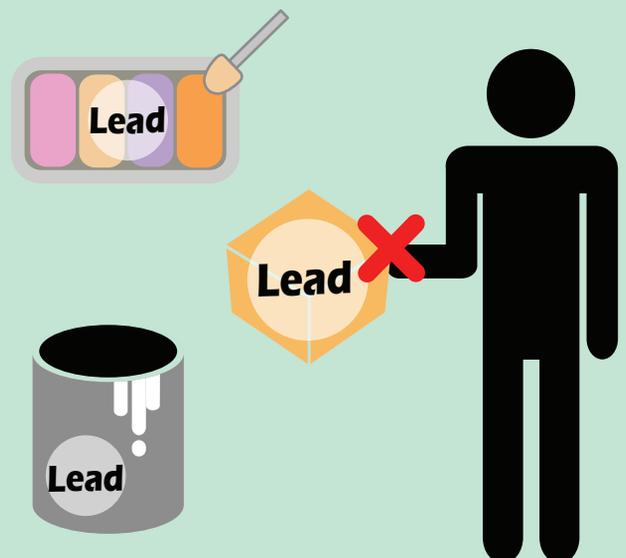
6. Mineral water may contain minerals in an amount in excess of the requirements of infants and young children, hence it should not be used for preparing formula milk.



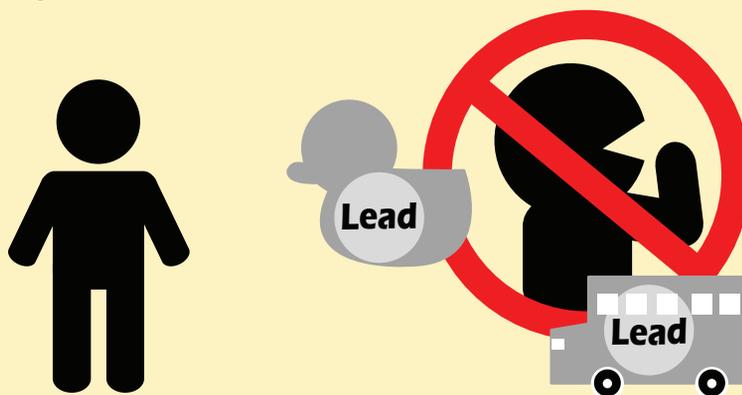
7. Some domestic water filters such as those certified by American NSF 53 Standard for removal of lead can reduce the lead level in water. It should be operated strictly according to manufactures' operational guidelines with regular maintenance.



8. Avoid exposure to all sources of lead.



9. Do not allow children to swallow or chew paint fragment, or the lead-based paint surface of toys and furniture.



10. Dust off your house regularly, especially when the paint is in deteriorating condition. Wash children's hands and faces frequently to remove any lead dusts and soil.



11. Keep children away from products containing lead, e.g. eyeshadow known as Surma and Kohl from Arabia, Middle East and South Asia, and hair dye.

12. Seek medical advice if you suspect that you have been exposed to high levels of lead for a prolonged period of time or that you have relevant symptoms.

