

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
District Department of the Environment



Office of the Director

February 17, 2011

**TO ALL PEDIATRICIANS, OB-GYNS, FAMILY PRACTICES, HEALTH CLINICS, AND  
MANAGED CARE ORGANIZATIONS SERVING DC RESIDENTS**

Dear Healthcare Provider,

On December 1, 2010, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published an epidemiologic study that presents findings about lead in the District of Columbia's tap water and reaches conclusions about the potential health impact of lead service lines (LSL) and partial lead service lines (PLSL).<sup>1</sup> One of the study's principal findings is that a home that is connected to a LSL or a PLSL is at increased risk of lead exposure. It is estimated that in DC **there are more than 23,000 homes with lead service lines and more than 14,000 homes with partial lead service lines. The new CDC findings have prompted the District's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program to issue the recommendations below.**

While the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority (DC Water) and District Department of the Environment (DDOE) have no reason to believe that potentially harmful levels of lead are widespread in households throughout the District, individual conditions and exposure can vary. The degree of increased risk for households with an intact or partial lead service line is difficult to quantify, as it depends in part on additional factors that are only identifiable on a case-by-case basis. Accordingly, **DDOE recommends that medical providers adopt the following precautionary measures.**

Providers whose patients include pregnant women or young children, especially those under 6 years of age, should:

- Ask their patients if the home they live in is connected to a lead service line or to a partial lead service line. If they don't know, they can call DC Water at 202-354-3600 or check DC Water's website for more information.
- If they believe or find out that they are connected to a LSL or a PLSL, advise them to test their tap water, by calling DC Water and requesting a free water test kit; in the meantime, advise them to use filtered tap water for all drinking and cooking purposes, or at minimum to allow the cold water tap to run for several minutes prior to using it.
- Recommend that any young children or pregnant women living in a home connected to a LSL or a PLSL get a blood lead test.

<sup>1</sup> Brown, M.J., *et al.*, Association between children's blood lead levels, lead service lines, and water disinfection, Washington, DC, 1998-2006. Environ. Res. (2010), doi:10.1016/j.envres.2010.10.003. A LSL is the pipe that connects the water main in some streets to household plumbing. A PLSL is what's left when some of the LSL has been eliminated, but some remains in place.



Ideally, all lead service lines should be completely replaced. Currently, DC Water replaces existing LSLs in conjunction with water main replacement projects. In these cases, DC Water only replaces the portion that is on public property. During this process, DC Water notifies homeowners of the potential health risks associated with partial LSLs and encourages them to replace the portion of the LSL located on their private property. DC Water also provides a supply of water filters and conducts follow-up lead testing for all residents that have a partial or complete lead service pipe replacement.

In addition, DC Water offers to replace the public portion of a LSL if a homeowner voluntarily replaces the private portion. The District's Department of Housing and Community Development has a long-standing grant program available to income-qualified property owners who are interested in replacing the private portion of their lead service line.

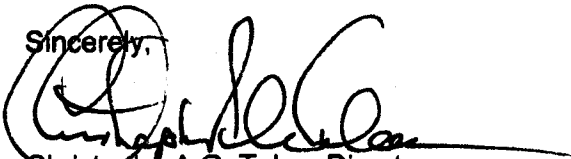
While this District Advisory focuses on the added risk of lead exposure CDC has found based on the presence of a LSL or a PLSL, **lead can also be found in tap water due to any of the following additional potential sources:**

- Lead solder: Connects pipes in home plumbing.
- Brass faucets, valves or fittings: Can contain up to 8% lead.
- Galvanized iron pipes: A type of household plumbing that can be a source of lead in homes that have, or have had, a lead service line.

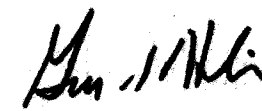
We encourage healthcare providers to share this important information with District residents and partner with us in protecting public health. We thank you for your attention to this matter, and for all you do to protect children's health in our nation's capital.

If you have any questions, please contact Harrison Newton at the District Department of the Environment, at 202-535-2624.

Sincerely,



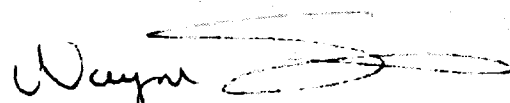
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