

Questions and Answers on Newark Drinking Water

Does EPA agree with the findings on filter effectiveness in Newark's final report?

Based on the information and findings presented in the [City of Newark Point-of-Use Filter Study August – September 2019 Report](#), EPA supports Newark's recommendation that to achieve the greatest lead reduction in water used for drinking and cooking, Newark residents who receive their water from the Pequannock water system should first **flush** water from their faucets with the filter in the off position for at least five (5) minutes, followed by **filtration** using a properly installed filter that is certified to remove lead until the new corrosion control treatment becomes fully effective.

The Agency also supports Newark's recommendation that residents who are able to use faucet-mounted filters should be advised to do so.

The report noted that 67 of the 265 total PUR filters were not viable for use in the study due to improper installation and maintenance by homeowners. It is therefore important that the City implement a strong education and outreach program regarding proper installation and operation of filters to help ensure the efficacy of the core flushing and filtering recommendation.

In the detailed comments about Newark's draft report that EPA provided to the City, the Agency specifically supported the following recommendations in that report including that Newark, when flushing and properly using filters:

- Emphasize flushing 5 minutes or more prior to use of filters to reduce lead levels in the unfiltered water;
- Provide specific considerations for pitcher filters including using the proper cartridges, installation requirements and flushing;
- Continue and enhance public education on how to flush effectively and on proper filter installation and use;
- Continue to provide access to filters and cartridges certified to reduce lead;
- Continue to improve corrosion control treatment in the water supply; and
- Continue to replace lead service lines.

What is flushing and can it remove lead in Newark's system?

Flushing means that you run water long enough to assure that the water in household plumbing and service lines is flushed through your faucet before you use the water for drinking or cooking. Flushing or running the tap has been shown to reduce the levels of lead in drinking water that has sat in the pipes and plumbing for an extended period of time because it clears out the water that has been in contact with the lead pipe before a resident uses the water. The results of samples taken in Newark homes that receive their water from the Pequannock water system showed the greatest reduction in lead levels for filtered samples taken after flushing.

Are filters effective in reducing lead in Newark drinking water?

The most effective means of reducing lead exposure in drinking water and water used for cooking are optimized corrosion control and lead service line replacement, along with public

education. Newark is working to do all three. Because optimizing corrosion control and replacing lead service lines takes time, and some homes may experience periods of high lead levels during this time, EPA supports the City's recommendation that Newark residents who receive their water from the Pequannock water system flush and use properly installed and maintained filters that are certified to remove lead. During this transition time in Newark, filters, when used in combination with flushing, are an effective means of reducing lead exposure.

How do I know if I am using my filter properly?

Proper installation and maintenance of filters is important to ensure filter effectiveness in reducing lead levels. EPA recommends following the manufacturer's instructions to ensure proper use. Newark's website provides an instructional video on the proper installation of filters <https://www.newarkleadservice.com/filters#using-your-filter>.

Where does lead in drinking water come from?

The most common sources of lead in drinking water are lead service lines and lead pipes, faucets, and fixtures. Lead service lines are more likely to be found in older cities and homes built before 1986. To find out for certain if you have lead in your drinking water, have your water tested. New Jersey and Newark conduct lead testing when requested. For additional information or to have your water tested call [973-733-6303](tel:973-733-6303) or email waterandsewer@ci.newark.nj.us.

Is it true that not using water for drinking or cooking in homes connected to lead service lines will hurt the ability for Newark's new corrosion control system to take effect?

The majority of water flowing into homes is not for drinking and cooking, but rather for other household needs, such as flushing toilets, washing, showering and bathing. As long as people continue to use water for those purposes, enough water should flow to make the new corrosion control treatment more effective.

Should people use unfiltered water for everyday purposes while continuing to flush and filter the water they used for drinking and cooking?

EPA supports the recommendation that Newark residents who receive their water from the Pequannock water system both ***flush*** water and then ***filter*** water with a properly installed filter that is certified to remove lead prior to use for drinking and cooking until the new corrosion control treatment becomes fully effective.

People should continue to run and use their unfiltered tap water for purposes other than cooking or drinking. Keeping water running through the lines should help Newark's new corrosion control treatment work better.

Is it safe for adults to shower or bathe with unfiltered water? Can babies be bathed in tap water?

Yes. Your skin does not absorb lead in water. If unfiltered tap water has lead, bathing and showering is still safe for children and adults. It is safe even if the skin has minor cuts or scrapes. Never drink bathwater, and do not allow babies and children to drink bathwater. If you have concerns, call your primary care doctor.

Is it safe to wash dishes and do laundry with unfiltered water?

Yes, but dry them after. Wash dishes, bottles, and toys with unfiltered soapy water. Dry before use. Lead in water will not be absorbed by porcelain, metal, or glass. Clothes washed in plain tap water will not contain enough lead to cause harm.

How many samples were collected and how were they analyzed?

More than 1,600 individual samples were collected from over 300 residences located in areas served by the Pequannock water supply, where either faucet-mounted or pitcher-type filters were in use. Between August 14 and September 6, 2019, sampling was carried out by teams from the City of Newark and its contractor CDM Smith, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and EPA.

The samples were analyzed using scientific methods specifically approved for measuring lead concentrations. These analyses were conducted at Newark and New Jersey Department of Health laboratories, as well as EPA's laboratory in Edison, New Jersey.