



August 27, 2021

Dear Valued Aqua Illinois Customer,

Aqua Illinois continues to diligently investigate remaining elevated lead levels in the water within a limited number of homes. We recognize that this has been challenging, and we appreciate every effort you've made to help us build on our significant progress to date.

Enclosed, you will find an Illinois Environmental Protection Agency-mandated public education document. While overall water quality in the community has improved and we have continually narrowed the number of homes that are impacted, this document will notify you that lead levels in certain University Park homes still exceed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's threshold for lead in drinking water. This document also provides helpful information about ways to reduce potential lead exposure.

Consistent with regulations, this information is sent to all customers in the University Park water system, even if your home is no longer under the advisory.

FOR CUSTOMERS WHO WERE REMOVED FROM THE ADVISORY

Customers whose homes were previously lifted from the advisory were never impacted by elevated lead levels and can continue to use tap water normally for consumption and non-consumption purposes. If you have any question about whether your home is impacted, please call **877.987.2782** and a member of our team will gladly assist you.

FOR CUSTOMERS WHO REMAIN UNDER THE ADVISORY

It is important to know that having a home in a lead advisory area does not automatically mean you have elevated lead levels in your water. That is because there is no lead in the source water or Aqua's University Park infrastructure.

The issue is isolated to a limited number of homes that are still experiencing elevated lead levels in their water due to internal plumbing materials. While we continue to make significant progress with our treatment protocol, we are working with scientists and regulators to identify any opportunities to further refine the treatment and help the remaining homes recover.

IEPA guidelines suggest that advisory area customers continue to flush cold tap water for two to three minutes and use an NSF-certified filter before consuming tap water.

Free filter resources remain available to eligible customers at the Aqua Distribution Center (24650 S Western Ave, University Park, IL 60484) three days a week to accommodate your schedules (Mondays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesdays 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Saturdays 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.).

If you have any questions after reading the information in this public education packet, including about the support we're offering, please call our customer service center at **877.987.2782** and a representative will connect you with a subject-matter expert.

As always, we appreciate your patience, and your ongoing cooperation remains vital to our success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C Blanchette". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "C".

Craig Blanchette
President, Aqua Illinois

Aqua Illinois

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER

Aqua Illinois – University Park found elevated levels of lead in drinking water in some homes/buildings. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and children 6 years and younger. Please read this notice closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

Updated Public Notification for University Park

Taking the following steps will reduce your exposure to lead:

- 1) Run cold tap water for two to three minutes, then filter cold tap water using a properly installed and maintained faucet or pitcher filter that is certified by the NSF to remove lead.
- 2) Clean your faucet aerators.
- 3) Use cold tap water filtered through an NSF-certified filter to reduce lead for drinking, cooking and making baby formula AND follow Steps 1-3.
- 4) Regularly use cold tap water at your kitchen sink and use tap water throughout the home to help the corrosion control treatment take effect in your home's pipes.

Health Effects of Lead

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.

Sources of Lead

Lead is a common metal found in the environment. Drinking water is one possible source of lead exposure. The main sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust or soil, and some plumbing materials. In addition, lead can be found in certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, food, and cosmetics. Other sources include exposure in the workplace and exposure from certain hobbies (lead can be carried on clothing or shoes). The primary sources of lead exposure for most children are deteriorating lead-based paint, lead-contaminated dust, and lead-contaminated residential soil. Exposure to lead is a significant health concern, especially for young children and infants whose growing bodies tend to absorb more lead than the average adult. **Infants that drink formula prepared with lead-contaminated water are at a greater risk because of the large volume of water they drink relative to their body size.** There has never been any lead in the source water or University Park infrastructure, but there is lead inside some customers' home plumbing. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures and solder.

Steps You Can Take to Reduce Your Exposure to Lead in Your Water

If the level of lead found in your drinking water is above 15 parts per billion (ppb) or if you are concerned about the lead levels at your location, there are several things you can do:

- ***Run your water to flush out lead.*** Run cold tap water for **two to three minutes** before using an NSF-certified lead-removing filter for drinking, cooking or preparing baby formula. Running the cold tap water will help to flush stagnant water from your pipes and reduce lead prior to consumption.
- ***Filter cold tap water through a filter certified by the NSF to remove lead before consuming your tap water.*** **Do not** cook with or drink water from the hot water tap; lead dissolves more easily into hot water. **Do not** use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula. After filtering the cold tap water, you can heat it up before consumption if you prefer (for example, on the stove or in the microwave).
- ***Remove and clean your aerators.*** Aerators are small attachments at the tips of faucets that regulate the flow of water. Over time, tiny particles of lead can break off and get trapped in aerator baskets, eventually contaminating the water. Unscrew your aerators every few weeks to remove debris, rinse and soak away any particles, and prevent build-up.
- ***Do not boil water to remove lead.*** Boiling water will not reduce lead.
- ***Consider alternative sources or treatment of water.*** You may want to consider purchasing bottled water or a water filter. Read the package to be sure the filter is approved to reduce lead or contact NSF International at 800-NSF-8010 or www.nsf.org for information on performance standards for water filters. Eligible customers can continue to pick up resources at the Aqua Distribution Center, free-of-charge.
- ***Request in-home technical assistance and sampling.*** Call us at the number below to find out how to get your water tested for lead. Additionally, Aqua Illinois continues to offer technical assistance to help you understand the water in your home and take steps to protect your household from lead, including cleaning your faucet aerator and using your filter.
- ***Identify if your plumbing fixtures contain lead.*** New brass faucets, fittings, and valves, including those advertised as "lead-free," may contribute lead to drinking water. As of June 19, 1986, new or replaced water service lines and new household plumbing materials could not contain more than 8% lead. Lead content was further reduced on January 4, 2014, and plumbing materials must now be certified as "lead-free" to be used (weighted average of wetted surface cannot be more than 0.25% lead). Consumers should be aware of this when choosing fixtures and take appropriate precautions.
- ***Get your child's blood tested.*** Contact your local health department or healthcare provider to find out how you can get your child tested for lead if you are concerned about exposure.

What Happened? What is Being Done?

On June 14, 2019, we immediately issued an advisory requesting that customers temporarily not consume unfiltered water in the service area to **be as protective as possible** after receiving compliance samples that showed elevated lead levels in 14 homes on June 13, 2019. Right away, we began investigating and gathering information to restore the water quality for our customers.

It is important to note that no state or federal regulation required us to take this unprecedented advisory action. We voluntarily took this precautionary step to protect the public until we learned more about the extent, cause and level of the issue AND until we could formalize our voluntary system to provide alternative sources of water. Our sweeping actions have gone beyond those of any supplier in the nation and were neither required by law nor ordered by any State or federal government agency. We took these steps because we care about the community.

Throughout our response, we have continually offered resources – including free filter resources, bottled water and in-home technical assistance and water sampling – and guidance for customers on how to consume tap water under the advisory and education and tips for home water use.

Our information indicates that there was never lead in the source water or our University Park infrastructure. To date, we have identified that the likely cause of elevated lead levels in a limited number of homes was due to water chemistry interacting with lead solder and other lead sources in the internal plumbing of certain homes built prior to 1990. Homes built after 1990 are not expected to have lead solder because the use of lead solder was banned by law in the mid-1980s.

In June 2019, we began working with national water chemistry experts and regulators to investigate and implement a new treatment plan to prevent lead inside customers' plumbing from interacting with fresh water flowing into their homes. These treatments are not harmful to humans or pets.

Within 30 days of discovering the exceedance, in coordination with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, we removed several areas and hundreds of homes from the advisory based on property age and water sample results. Through constant monitoring and proactive treatment efforts, we have significantly reduced the number of homes and customers that are impacted and improved the water quality overall. As we continue to provide support and resources, we are working diligently with regulators and experts to address issues within certain homes and optimize the treatment's effectiveness.

Our customers' health and safety remain at the heart of everything we do, and we will continue doing all we can to be a good community partner.

For More Information

Call Aqua Illinois Customer Service at **877.987.2782** or visit our website at **www.WaterFactsIL.com**. For more information on reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's Web site at www.epa.gov/lead or contact your health care provider.

Please share this information with all other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, schools, businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

Aqua Illinois – University Park

PWS ID #IL1975030

Published & Distributed August 27, 2021

AQUASM Guidance for Cleaning Faucet Aerators



Be Lead-Safe: Clean your aerators

One way to protect your household from lead is to periodically clean your faucet aerators. Aerators are small attachments at the tips of faucets that regulate the flow of water. Over time, tiny particles of lead can break off and get trapped in aerator baskets, eventually contaminating the water.

Cleaning them only takes a few minutes – here's how:

1. Unscrew the small round piece that is attached to the bottom of your faucet; if it hasn't been removed in a while, you may need to give it a gentle counter-clockwise turn with a wrench.
2. In most cases, you can remove small debris by simply turning the aerator over and rinsing it with water. However, grime or stubborn pieces can be removed using a glass of vinegar and an old toothbrush.
3. You can soak the aerator as long as necessary in the vinegar, but five minutes will be sufficient. Simply brush off any particles and rinse with water.
4. Reassemble the aerator, which normally has a washer to prevent leaks, and screw it back onto your faucet. It's that easy!
5. Repeat this procedure every few weeks to prevent buildup.





Frequently Asked Questions

Keeping you informed remains a top priority as we build on our progress. We've compiled some useful information to address most inquiries about our progress. If you can't find the answer to your question below, please feel free to give us a call at **877.987.2782** or visit **WaterFactsIL.com**.

- **Are we any closer to a resolution?**

Yes. State and federal drinking water regulations require that 90-percent of regularly sampled homes have water lead levels of 15 micrograms per liter (ug/L) or less as measured over six-month monitoring periods. In January 2021, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) confirmed that water quality in University Park was restored to below the regulatory lead action level for the July to December 2020 monitoring period.

While our results indicate major progress over previous six-month monitoring periods, water samples processed and submitted to the IEPA indicate that we did not meet the regulatory threshold for the latest monitoring period that ended in June 2021. Importantly, the data show that 87-percent of samples met the threshold, just below the 90-percent standard. The 87-percent results still represent major overall improvement and reflect the treatment's effectiveness in helping homes recover.

It is important to note that having a home in the advisory area does not automatically mean there are elevated lead levels in your water. No lead is present in the source water or Aqua's University Park infrastructure. Our sampling pool indicates that many homes are not impacted, which gives us confidence both that this issue is isolated to a limited number of homes with lead in internal plumbing materials, and that our treatment efforts are working.

If you have any question about whether your home is impacted, Aqua continues to offer **free water sampling and in-home consultation**. We encourage you to call us at **877.987.2782** to get started.

Our commitment to our customers remains unwavering. While we continue to make significant progress with our treatment protocol, we are also working with scientists and regulators to identify any opportunities to further refine the treatment and help the remaining homes recover. July 2021 marks the start of a new six-month monitoring period that will continue through December 2021, and we will continue to keep the community informed with water quality updates.

- **What if my home was lifted from the advisory?**

If your home was lifted from the advisory, your home was never impacted, and you can continue to use your water normally. Through our water sampling protocol, we know that hundreds of homes – both inside and outside of the advisory area – were never impacted by elevated lead levels in their water. That is because the source of the lead is not the source water or the University Park infrastructure. Instead, our investigation indicates that the issue is isolated to a limited number of remaining homes that are still experiencing elevated lead levels in their water due to internal plumbing materials.

- **Should I continue to flush and filter before consuming tap water?**

Regulators recommend that customers under the advisory flush and filter tap water before consumption by following these steps:

1. first, run cold tap water for two to three minutes when water has sat stagnant in internal plumbing, and
2. second, filter cold tap water through faucet or pitcher filters that are certified to remove lead, like those Aqua Illinois continues to offer.

After filtering cold tap water, you can heat it up before consumption if you prefer (for example, on the stove or in the microwave).

- **What are Aqua Illinois' next steps in the community?**

Our priority has been and continues to be restoration of the water quality in University Park. Every step of the way, our response has been informed by data and science, and we have continually adapted our treatment approach to narrow in on the remaining impacted homes. Through constant monitoring and proactive treatment efforts, we have significantly reduced the number of homes and customers that are impacted and improved the water quality overall.

The source of the lead is not the source water or the University Park infrastructure, and this remains a home-by-home issue. Today, the issue is isolated to a limited number of remaining homes that are still experiencing elevated lead levels in their water due to internal plumbing materials.

July 2021 marked the start of a new six-month monitoring period that continues through December 2021. While we continue to provide support and resources – including free filter resources, bottled water and in-home technical assistance and water sampling – we are working diligently with regulators and national experts to address issues within certain homes and optimize the effectiveness of our treatment. As always, Aqua Illinois remains committed to full transparency and cooperation and will continue providing updates and guidance.

- **Why are only certain homes impacted?**

Aqua Illinois has been working 24/7 to ensure it is providing the best water possible to University Park customers. Many factors like water use, plumbing configuration and excess lead solder, to name a few, can impact how quickly and effectively the treatment can work in the limited number of homes that remain impacted. We remain committed to working one-on-one with customers to assess individual home water quality and provide customized support.

Through rigorous monitoring and adjustments to our treatment protocols, overall water quality in the community has improved significantly and we have gradually narrowed the number of homes and customers who are impacted. While we continue making significant progress, we are fully committed to helping remaining impacted homes recover. We are working with these customers on an individual basis to collect water samples, monitor the treatment progress and assess individual home needs. In addition, the nation's best experts are working diligently, in lockstep with regulators, to identify any opportunities to further refine the treatment.