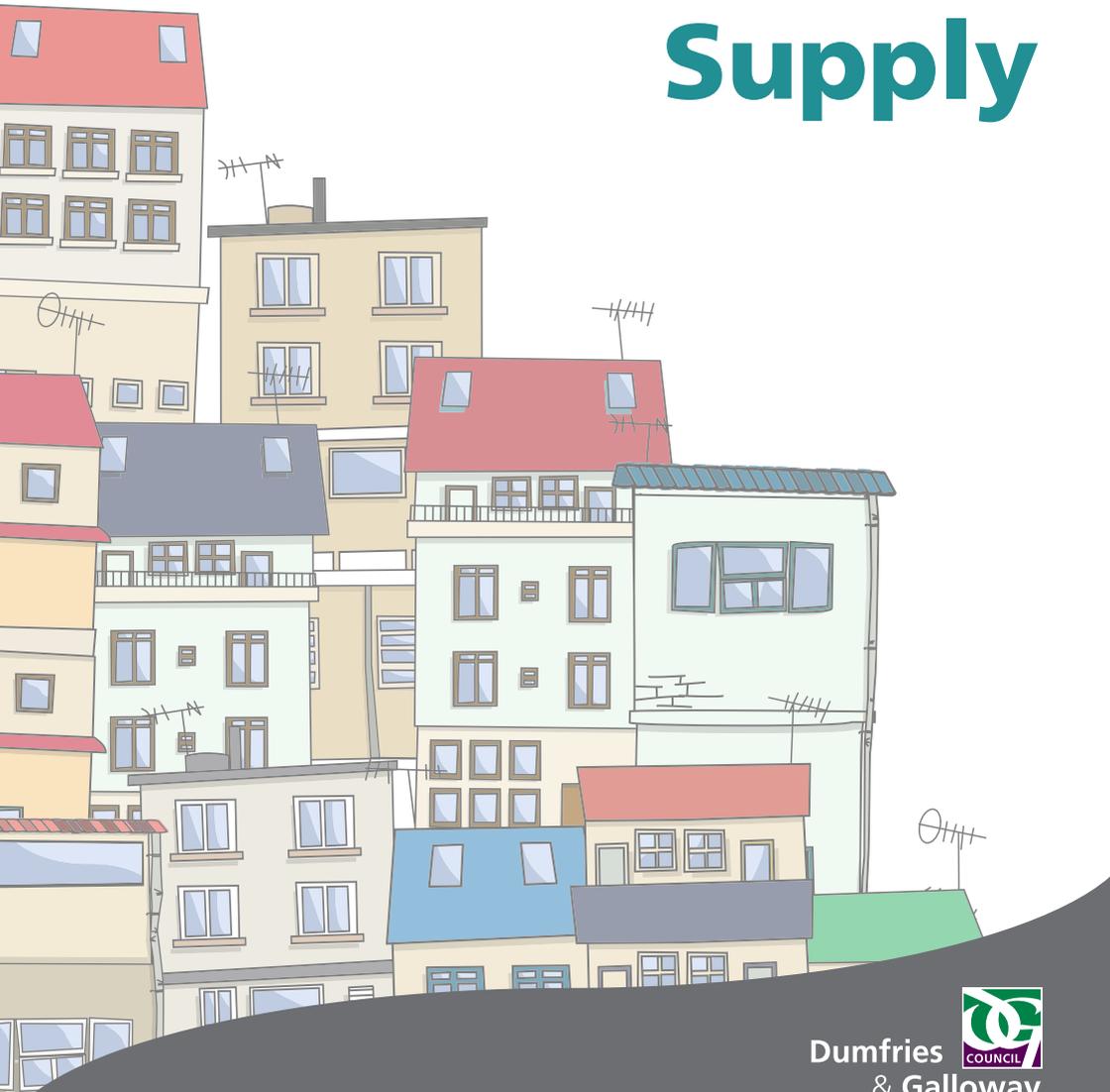


# A GUIDE TO **Lead and Your Water Supply**



## Lead In Drinking Water

Lead does not occur in significant concentrations in mains water in Scotland. However, small quantities may be found in tap water in older properties with lead service pipes, lead joints or lead tanks. The regulatory standard for lead in drinking water is 10 micrograms per litre of water. If you are unsure whether your property has lead pipes or you are concerned about the level of lead in your drinking water supply, please contact the Scottish Water Customer Helpline on 0800 0778 778 for further information and advice.

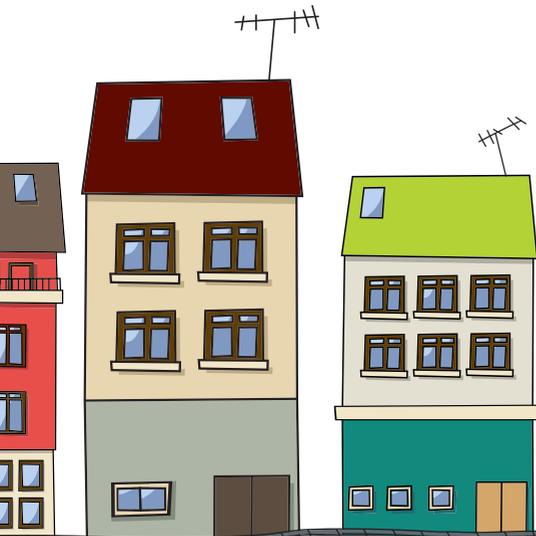
## Identifying Lead Pipes

The use of lead pipes for internal plumbing was stopped in 1970. If your home was built before this date, you may wish to check the type of pipes that are supplying your drinking water.

### Inside Your Home

Find the pipe leading to the internal stop valve (this is usually under the kitchen sink or sometimes in the cupboard under the stairs) and check for the following characteristics:

- Unpainted lead pipes are dull grey and have rounded swollen joints where they join other pipes (look closely - lead pipes may be painted and won't be the usual dull colour).
- They are soft and if gently scraped you will see shiny, silver-coloured metal underneath.
- Tapping a lead pipe with a metal object will produce a dull thud rather than a clear ringing produced by copper or iron pipe.



## Outside Your Home

Even if you have already replaced your internal plumbing, it is important to check if any underground water pipes in your garden or driveway are made of lead.

- Open the flap of your outside stop valve and look at the pipe running towards your property.
- If you can, scrape its surface gently to reveal the pipe, which if lead, will be a shiny, silver-coloured metal underneath.

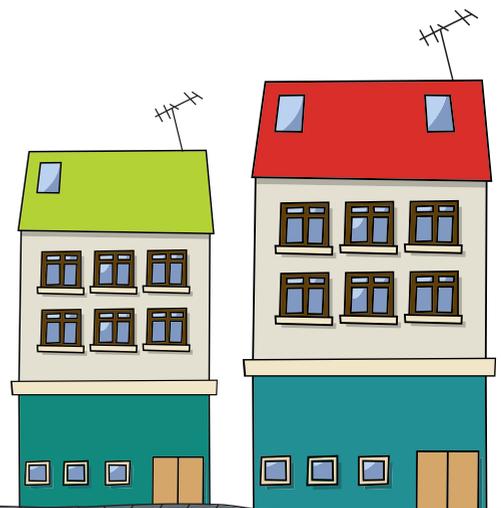
## How to identify other water pipe materials:

- Copper pipes may appear dull brown on the outside, but will be bright copper if gently scraped. They are hard and when tapped with a metal object it will produce a ringing sound.
- Iron pipes are dark grey or brown and may be rusty. They are hard and not easily scratched.
- Plastic pipes may be grey, black or blue.

Alternatively, if you are unsure of what the pipework in your property is made of, you should contact a Scottish & Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers Federation (SNIPEF) registered plumber to carry out these checks for you (contact details are provided at the end of this leaflet).

## What To Do If You Have Lead Pipes

When water lies in contact with lead service pipes, lead lined tanks or lead solder, particularly for longer periods it can absorb lead. The longer the water lies in contact with the lead, the more lead will enter the water.



## Replacing Lead Pipes

To eliminate lead from your drinking water, you need to replace any lead pipes, lead solder joints or lead fittings. If your water has been analysed and the lead level is higher than the current standard, you should consider replacing your lead pipe as soon as possible, especially if there are children in the property.

You can call Environmental Health on 030 33 33 3000 to arrange a test for lead content if you have lead piping carrying your drinking water.

**Lead Service Pipes:** If there is a high level of lead in your drinking water this is likely to be caused by the service pipe to your property. This is the pipe that carries water from the water main in your street direct to your property. The ownership of the service pipe is divided into two parts, the communication pipe and the supply pipe.

**The Communication Pipe:** Scottish Water is responsible for looking after and maintaining the water main in your street and the communication pipe up to, and including, the stopcock at the boundary of your property.

**The Supply Pipe:** The homeowner is responsible for maintaining and replacing the supply pipe from the stopcock into the property and all of the indoor plumbing. It extends from the boundary of the street in which a water main is laid and connects with the internal stop tap usually found under the kitchen sink.

If you live in a flat you should check your title deeds as it is likely that the supply pipe will connect all or several of the properties in the building. If this is the case all owners who share the supply have a joint responsibility for maintaining and replacing the pipe.

Please see our leaflet on Common Repairs for further information.

**Lead Soldered Joints:** Lead may also enter your water supply through soldered joints in household copper pipework.

**Lead Lined Water Tanks:** Some older properties, including tenements, may still have a lead-lined water storage tank.

Where the drinking water tap in the kitchen is supplied from a household storage tank, Scottish Water advises that the kitchen plumbing is changed

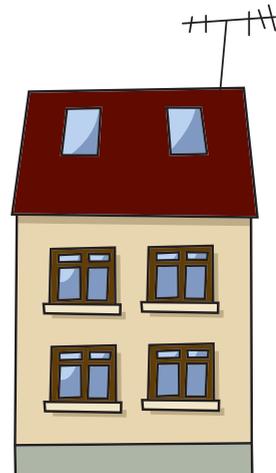
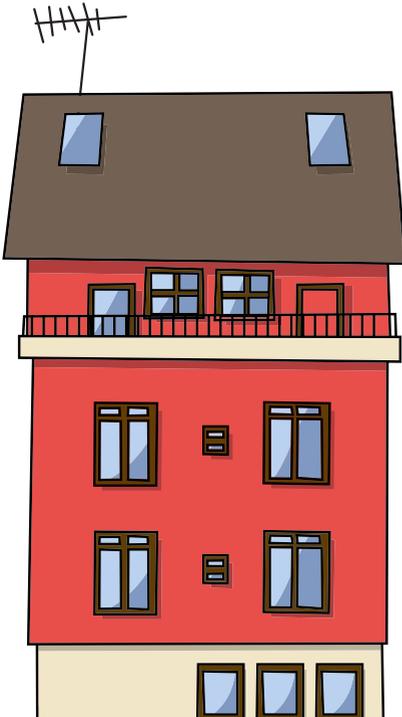
to connect this tap direct from the supply pipe. This is particularly important if there is a lead-lined tank, because lead may enter the water from this tank.

If you decide to replace the lead pipework, you should contact Scottish Water and a Scottish & Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers Federation (SNIPEF) registered plumber for further information and advice. In addition, if your property has a shared water supply pipe all affected owners are responsible for the cost involved. You should discuss replacing the pipe with your neighbours and work together to obtain estimates for the work.

## Practical Steps to Reduce Lead In Drinking Water

If you have lead pipe, you should follow these simple steps until you are able to replace them:

- Always take your drinking and cooking water directly from a mains-fed tap. This is normally the tap at the kitchen sink.
- Run the mains tap for 2 minutes first thing in the morning to flush out any water that has been lying overnight before using any water for drinking or cooking. You should also do this if the water has not been used all day (e.g. when you're out at work or away on holiday) and always before making up bottle feeds for infants.
- Never use water for drinking or cooking from any hot tap. Warm water increases the amount of lead that is absorbed from plumbing.



## Hiring A Plumber

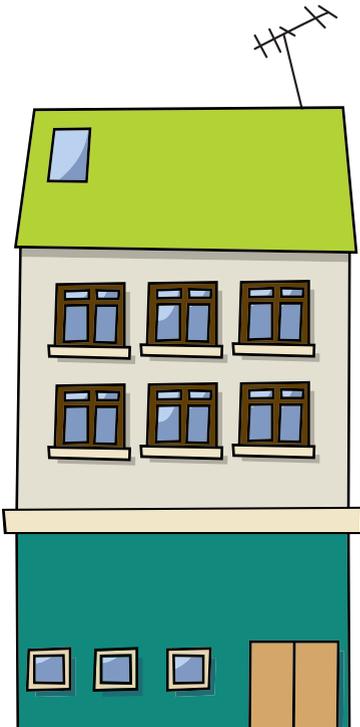
PLEASE NOTE DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY COUNCIL DOES NOT RECOMMEND ANY TRADESPERSONS OR PROFESSIONAL

### SERVICES

Dumfries & Galloway Council's Trusted Trader Scheme helps people to choose reputable traders from customer feedback. The scheme is aimed mainly at home improvement traders. The traders are reviewed by customers as well as checked and monitored by us to make sure they're trading legally.

Tel: 030 33 33 3000

[www.dumgal.gov.uk/trustedtrader](http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/trustedtrader)



### Do

- Ask for references. Quality tradesperson or professionals will be happy to supply details of happy customers.
- Make sure that the tradesperson or is a member of the trade association Scottish & Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers Federation (SNIPEF).
- Obtain quotations from at least 3 different contractors.
- Ask for a warranty or guarantee on the work and materials supplied and ensure you obtain any necessary certificates.
- Make sure you receive an invoice and a receipt for any work.

### Don't

- Trust companies when their literature does not contain an address.
- Employ anyone you do not trust.
- Pay cash upfront or before you are fully satisfied with the works.

## Further Information

Dumfries & Galloway Council Environmental Health Service provide information and advice on lead contamination in drinking water.

Tel: 030 33 33 3000

e-mail: [environmentalstandards@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:environmentalstandards@dumgal.gov.uk)

Scottish Water can provide information and advice on lead including whether your street has lead pipes.

Tel: 0800 0778 778

[www.scottishwater.co.uk](http://www.scottishwater.co.uk)

Scottish & Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers Federation (SNIPEF) provides an online directory of licensed plumbers.

Tel: 0131 556 0600

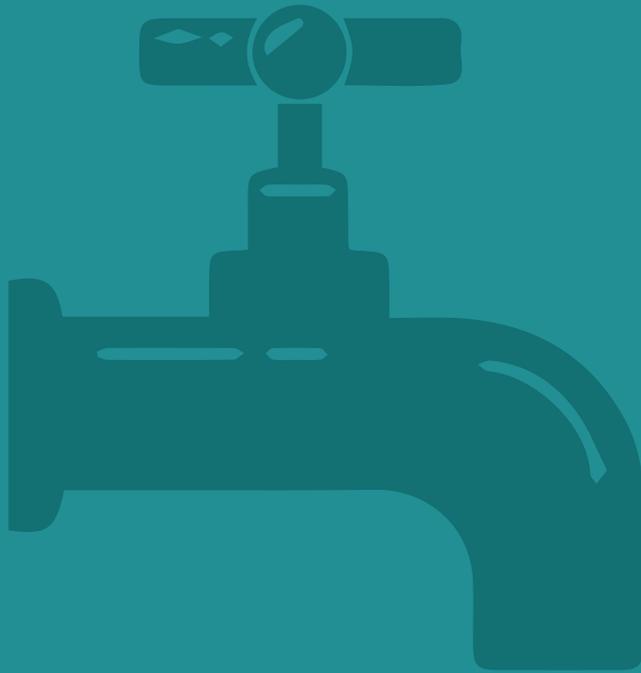
[www.needaplumber.org](http://www.needaplumber.org)

Care and Repair offer independent advice and assistance to help elderly and disabled homeowners repair, improve or adapt their homes so that they can live in comfort and safety in their own community.

Tel: 01387 321 300

[www.loreburn.org.uk/about-us/care-repair](http://www.loreburn.org.uk/about-us/care-repair)





## Contact Us

We have a range of leaflets on different topics available on request. If you would like further information on the types of assistance available to homeowners please contact:

**Dumfries & Galloway Council**

**Strategic Housing**

**Kirkbank House**

**English Street**

**Dumfries**

**DG1 2HS**

**Tel: 030 33 33 3000**

**Email: [strategichousing@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:strategichousing@dumgal.gov.uk)**

**[www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15101/Housing](http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15101/Housing)**

