



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

# PRESSURE INCREASE AND WATER QUALITY IMPACTS



## Will an increase in water pressure impact my water quality?

A pressure increase changes the flow of water in pipes and may temporarily affect your water quality, including:

- Discolored water from disturbing old water mains and household pipes.
- Potential lead release from lead sources, including lead service pipes, solder, brass faucets, valves or fittings and galvanized iron pipes.

## What should I do if I experience discolored water?

Changes in water pressure can cause rust and sediment to break off from aging water mains and pipes and release metals in water. Iron in water is not a health risk, but often causes discolored water.

If you experience discolored water:

- Flush your inside plumbing until water clears. Opening the cold water faucets one at a time, working from the lowest level (preferably the basement) to the highest level in your house. Do not open a hot water faucet until the system is completely flushed.
- Do not use hot water until water clears. If you experience discolored water from your hot water tap for several hours, flush your water heater.
- Do not do laundry. If discoloration occurs during laundry, do not dry clothes. Rewash clothes to avoid stains.
- After flushing, remove and clean all faucet aerators. Rust and sediment can build up in the screen.
- Consider replacing old household plumbing, particularly galvanized pipes.

You may experience discolored water when water sits in your pipes for long periods of time. Flush your cold water taps for two minutes when water is not used for several hours and before using water for drinking and cooking.

If you continue to experience discolored water after flushing your cold water taps, contact the Drinking Water Division at (202) 612-3440 or 24-hour Emergency Hotline at (202) 612-3400.

## What is galvanized plumbing?

Galvanized pipes are made of iron and are a dull, silver-gray color. Over many years, corrosion will build up inside the walls of galvanized plumbing and may cause water quality and pressure issues. Pipe corrosion can easily break off and release

iron and other metals in water. This plumbing material was installed in many homes built before the 1960s.

## What is a service pipe?

This pipe connects the water main in the street to your household plumbing. The material of water service pipes can vary. Some households have, or once had, a lead service pipe. Contact our Customer Service at (202) 354-3600 to learn more about your service pipe material. You can also view our service pipe map online at [geo.dcwater.com/Lead](http://geo.dcwater.com/Lead).

## Is there a potential for lead release in my water after the pressure increase?

If you have a lead service pipe or household lead sources, the change in pressure may increase lead release in water. Lead levels can potentially remain elevated until pipes adjust to the change in water pressure. Galvanized pipes are also a plumbing source of lead in households that have, or once had, a lead service pipe.

## How long may lead levels remain elevated in my drinking water?

If you have a lead service pipe, lead levels may be elevated until your pipe adjusts to the change in water pressure. DC Water recommends you filter your water for six months. Pregnant or nursing women, and children under age six should always use filtered tap water for drinking and cooking until all sources of lead have been removed.

## How can I minimize lead exposure after the pressure increase?

- DC Water will provide a water filter and six-month supply of replacement cartridges to homes that have, or once had, a lead service pipe.
- You should use filtered tap water for drinking and cooking, including water used for making infant formula, ice and beverages. If you are interested in additional replacement cartridges, check local stores or contact the manufacturer.
- Flush all household faucets by opening each cold water faucet one at a time, working from the lowest level (preferably the basement) to the highest level in your house. To flush each faucet, remove the aerator and fully turn on the cold water faucet at maximum flow for approximately ten minutes. When flushing is complete, turn off the faucet, clean the aerator screen and screw the aerator back on the faucet. Repeat these steps for all household faucets. The aerator is located at the tip of the faucet and has a screen to collect particles and sediment. Do not open a hot water faucet until the system is completely flushed.

- Do not use hot tap water for drinking and cooking. Always use cold tap water, including water used for making ice, beverages and infant formula. Hot water dissolves contaminants and may contain metals, sediment and bacteria that build up in the water heater.
- Pregnant or nursing women and children under age six should use filtered tap water for drinking and cooking until all sources of lead in drinking water have been removed.
- Test your water for lead. DC Water offers free lead testing to help residents identify potential lead sources. To request a free lead test kit, contact Customer Service at (202) 354-3600 or email [leadtest@dcwater.com](mailto:leadtest@dcwater.com)

## MINIMIZING WATER QUALITY IMPACTS AFTER PRESSURE INCREASE

IF YOU HAVE...	POTENTIAL WATER QUALITY IMPACTS	WHAT-TO-DO
Galvanized Plumbing	Discolored Water <i>Brown/ Red/ Yellow/ Orange</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iron in water is not a health risk.</li> <li>• Flush cold water taps for 15 minutes or until water clears.</li> <li>• Do not use hot water until water clears. If you experience discolored water from your hot water tap for several hours, flush your water heater.</li> <li>• Do not do laundry. If discoloration occurs during laundry, do not dry clothes. Rewash clothes to avoid stains.</li> <li>• Use a sediment filter to remove iron in water. Sediment filters can be installed at the household water service point-of-entry or individuals faucets and should be certified to meet NSF Standard 42.</li> <li>• Replace galvanized pipes.</li> </ul>
	Reduced Water Pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean faucet aerators.</li> <li>• Drain your water heater.</li> <li>• Replace galvanized pipes.</li> </ul>
Lead Pipe or Galvanized Plumbing and once had a Lead Service Pipe	Lead in Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to lead is a public health risk, especially for pregnant women and children under age six.</li> <li>• Flush inside plumbing for approximately 60 minutes total following the pressure increase. During this period of time, flush water throughout your house by opening cold water faucets one at a time, working from the lowest level (preferably the basement) to the highest level. Do not open a hot water faucet until the system is completely flushed. After flushing, remove and clean all faucet aerators.</li> <li>• Use filtered tap water: Select a filter labeled and certified to meet NSF Standard 53 for lead removal. Pregnant or nursing women and children under age six should use filtered tap water for drinking and cooking until all sources of lead in drinking water have been removed. This includes using filtered water for preparing infant formula, beverages and ice.</li> <li>• Replace a lead service pipe with copper pipe. To help determine if you have, or previously had, a lead service pipe and for information about DC Water's Voluntary Lead Service Pipe Replacement Program contact Customer Service at (202) 354-3600. Even after a lead service pipe is replaced, galvanized plumbing can continue to be a household lead source.</li> <li>• Replace household galvanized plumbing. If pipe replacement is not an option, use a water filter until these pipes are removed.</li> </ul>