



Lead pipes

Information for our household customers



Was your home built before 1970?
If so, your water pipes could be made of lead.
This booklet explains how to check for lead pipes and provides simple advice on how to reduce your lead risk.



If your home was built before 1970, there's a chance that you have some lead plumbing

This could include the outside pipe that brings water into your home (known as the supply pipe) and possibly some of your internal pipes too.

Traces of lead in your water can be harmful, with the greatest risk being to pregnant mothers and children under the age of six.

At United Utilities, we've made great strides in the way we treat our water in order to minimise the amount of lead it picks up.

However, where lead pipes are present at home, there can still be a health risk – so it's sensible to find out how you can protect yourself and your family.



Does your home have lead pipes?

Lead is a dull grey metal, easily distinguished from copper or plastic. Here are some simple ways to check if you have lead pipes:

1. Ask your neighbour:

If your neighbour's home has lead pipes, yours might too – especially if the two properties are of a similar age.

2. Look in the right places:

Try to find the water pipe which comes into your home from outside. It's often under the kitchen sink, but can sometimes be found in a downstairs loo, garage or cellar. In older properties, this is the pipe most likely to be made from lead.

3. Scratch test:

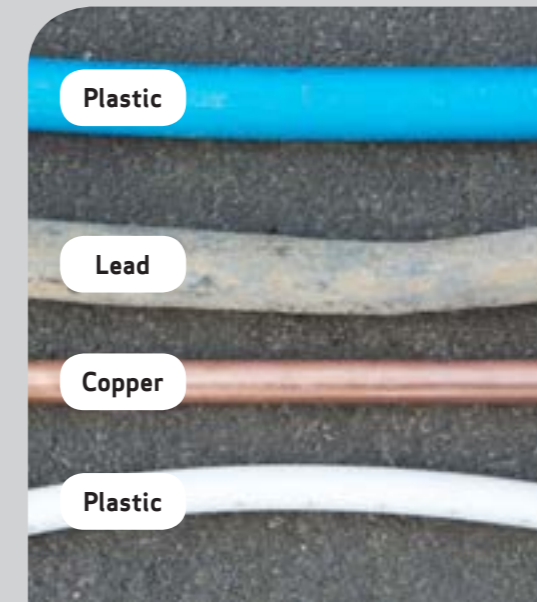
Unpainted lead pipes are dull grey and easily scratched, revealing a shiny, silver colour beneath.

4. Unusual bends:

Lead is very malleable, and will often have irregular bends.

5. Speak to a plumber:

If you are still unsure, ask a plumber for a second opinion.



Common household pipes. The lead pipe is easily distinguished by its dull grey colour.

Watch the video

You can find a short video at [unitedutilities.com/lead-pipes](https://www.unitedutilities.com/lead-pipes) which shows you how to look for lead pipes.

Reducing lead risk: top tips

If you have lead water pipes, the best way to safeguard health is to get them replaced by a plumber. There are also a few simple things you can do to protect yourself and your family:



Run the water:

When you wake up in the morning, run the cold tap in the kitchen to flush out any water that has been standing in the pipes overnight. A sink full should do it. You can always use this water for your plants.



Use the kitchen tap:

Only use water from the cold tap in the kitchen for drinks and food preparation.



Bottled water:

If you decide to give babies and infants bottled water, or use it for preparing infant formula, check the label to make sure it contains less than 200 mg per litre of sodium (Na).



Don't knock it:

Try not to disturb or knock lead pipes as this can increase the lead in your water.



Flush the loo:

Flushing the loo will also do the job of clearing any water that has been standing in the pipes overnight.



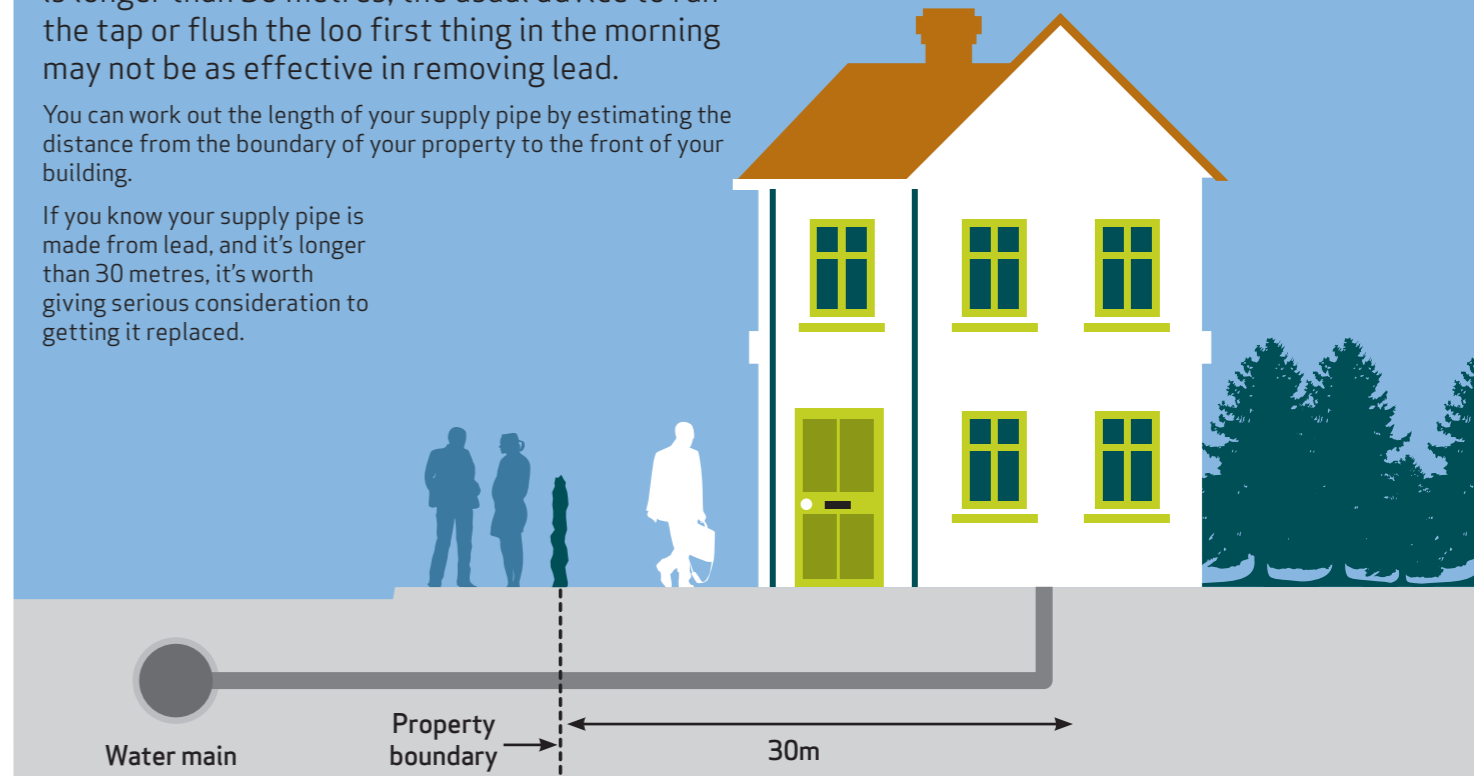
Boiling water doesn't help! Please be aware that boiling your water doesn't remove lead content.

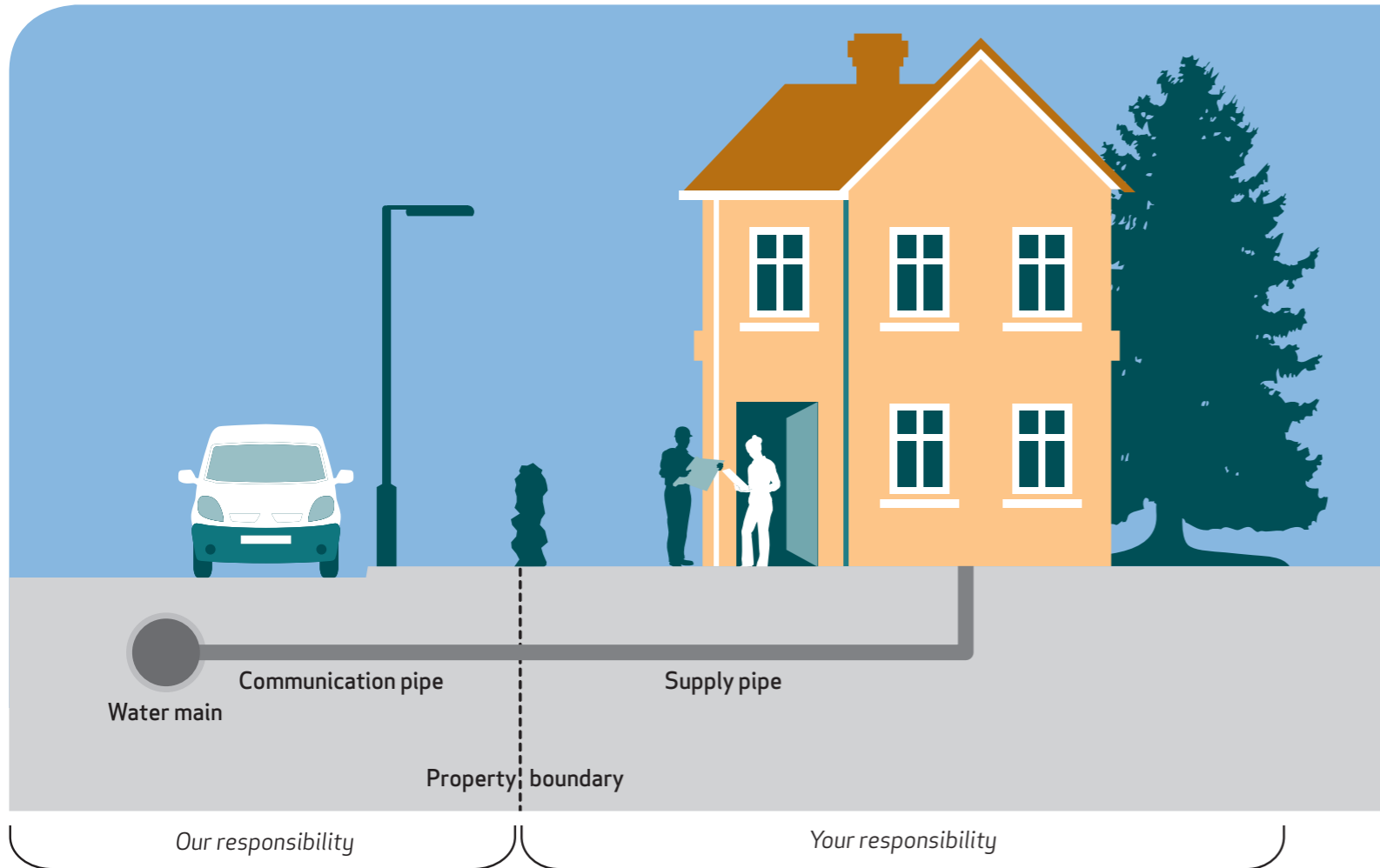
The 30 metre rule

If your supply pipe (the underground pipe which connects your property to the public water mains) is longer than 30 metres, the usual advice to run the tap or flush the loo first thing in the morning may not be as effective in removing lead.

You can work out the length of your supply pipe by estimating the distance from the boundary of your property to the front of your building.

If you know your supply pipe is made from lead, and it's longer than 30 metres, it's worth giving serious consideration to getting it replaced.





Replacing pipes

The surest way to eliminate any health risk from lead pipes is to get them replaced. If you decide to replace them, you'll need to employ a plumber to do the work. You can find your nearest quality assured plumber at watersafe.org.uk, where there is a useful search facility.

How it works

You are responsible for the pipes inside your building, and the underground supply pipe which runs from your building to your property boundary.

If you need to replace your supply pipe, we'll connect your new pipe up to our network, free of charge, once you've had the work done.

If we find any remaining lead beyond your property boundary (known as the communication pipe) we'll replace it.

For further advice about replacing your lead supply pipe, getting reconnected, and to obtain an application form, please call us on **0345 072 6082**, or visit unitedutilities.com/lead-pipes



Extra benefits

As well as safeguarding health, replacing your lead supply pipe with a modern plastic version can improve water pressure. For example, you might notice that your shower has become more powerful.

This is because the water can flow more easily through the new pipe. The new pipe will also be less prone to bursts or leaks, which could save you money in the long run.

Head online for more information

You'll find more about lead pipes on our website, such as how to spot lead and top tips for safeguarding health. unitedutilities.com/lead-pipes

This leaflet is one in a series of publications containing useful information for our customers. Others that may be of interest to you are:

- **Replacing lead and common supply pipes**
- **Caring for water in your home**
- **A simple guide to pipes, drains and sewers**
- **A guide to paying your water bill**
- **Water meter application pack**
- **Testing your household water meter**
- **A guide to our ExtraCare services**
- **A guide to using water wisely**
- **WaterSure application pack**
- **Our complaints procedure**

You can download any of our leaflets from our website:

unitedutilities.com/leaflets, or write to: United Utilities, PO Box 459, Warrington WA55 1WB. Alternatively, our most frequently requested leaflets are available through our 24-hour automated leaflet request line on **0800 980 6050**.

All our booklets are available in large print, Braille and on audio CD or cassette. Please call us on **0345 672 2888** to order a leaflet in any of these formats.

If English is not your first language, our key booklets are also available in Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Chinese, Bengali and Punjabi on our website unitedutilities.com/translations



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In case you need to contact us:



To talk to us about your bill:

0345 672 2888 if you don't have a water meter

0345 672 2999 if you have a water meter

Opening hours: 8am – 6pm Mon to Fri.

To talk to us about your water and wastewater services:

0345 672 3723

Opening hours: 8am – 8pm Mon to Fri;

8am – 6pm Sat; 8am – 12 noon Sun.

If you have hearing or speech difficulties, and use a textphone, please dial **18001** followed by the number you require.



You can write to us at:

United Utilities, PO Box 459, Warrington WA55 1WB



Or go online:

unitedutilities.com

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You can manage your water account online.

Register now at: unitedutilities.com/myaccount

