

# Copper Above the Action Level in your Public Water Supply

## *What you Need to Know to Protect Your Health*



People need a small amount of copper for their bodies to function correctly, but too much copper can be harmful. For most people, drinking water with high amounts of copper can cause upset stomach, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps. These problems will often go away once you are no longer exposed to high amounts of copper.

During recent testing, drinking water samples taken from more than 10 percent of the homes tested in your community exceeded the action level for copper (1.3 parts per million). In response, the public water supply must take action to reduce the amount of copper in the water. Not all homes in your community were tested.

The most common source of copper in tap water is copper plumbing. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) recommends flushing water pipes to minimize the amount of copper in your drinking water (see flushing instructions on page 2). If you have a formula-fed infant in your household, or you have difficulty metabolizing copper, MDHHS has the following recommendations.

## MDHHS Copper Action Level Exceedance Recommendation

### Infants younger than 12 months

**Be sure to use cold, flushed water for infants younger than 12 months for drinking and mixing powdered infant formula. See flushing instructions on page 2.**

- Formula-fed infants already get their needed copper from formula. Higher levels of copper from drinking water may cause an upset stomach or other health issues, as infants may be more sensitive to elevated copper levels.
- If you are concerned your baby has an ongoing sensitivity to copper, talk with your child's doctor.

### People with disorders of copper metabolism

**People with disorders of copper metabolism should continue to avoid potential sources of copper, such as drinking water, according to their doctor's recommendations.**

## Testing water for copper

Testing your water with a certified lab is the best way to find out how much copper is in your drinking water. Your public water supply may offer to test your water for free. If not, you can test it yourself.

Visit [Michigan.gov/EGLElab](https://www.michigan.gov/EGLElab) and choose "Drinking Water Laboratory" to learn how to order a test kit. The cost is typically \$30. If you have questions about testing your water, you can contact the MDHHS Drinking Water Hotline at 844-934-1315.

## Things you can do to reduce copper in drinking water



**Get your water moving.** Flushing water pipes can reduce the amount of copper in your water. If you have not used your water for several hours, flush your pipes for about 2 minutes by doing any of the following:

- running faucets
- running a load of laundry
- taking a shower
- washing dishes

In addition, always run your water until it's cold before using it for drinking, cooking, rinsing food, brushing teeth, and preparing powdered baby formula. This flushes out any water that had been sitting in that sink's pipes and faucet.

After a water meter replacement, water main replacement, or repairs to a water leak in the water distribution system near your home, call your public water supply for whole-house flushing directions. For more information, go to <https://bit.ly/32CYj0v>.



**Use a water filter.** A certified copper-reducing filter can reduce copper in drinking water. Filters are made to reduce copper, but do not guarantee that all copper will be removed from drinking water. When choosing a filter, look for the certification NSF/ANSI Standard 53 for copper reduction. It is important to follow the manufacturer's directions.



**Clean your faucet aerators.** Clean the mesh screen, or aerator, on the end of your faucet at least every six months. Small pieces of copper can get trapped in the aerator. Cleaning it will remove any copper.

If construction is being done to the water system or pipes near your home, check and clean your drinking water faucet aerator every month until the work is done. Go to <https://bit.ly/2JglQvE> for more information.

## Things you should not do to reduce copper exposure



**Do not use hot water for drinking or cooking.** Copper dissolves more easily into hot water.

**Do not try to remove copper by boiling the water.** Copper is not removed by boiling. Water evaporates during boiling, so the amount of copper in the water may end up higher than before boiling.

## For More Information

Michigan Department of  
Health and Human Services  
844-934-1315

Michigan Department of  
Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy  
800-662-9278  
[Michigan.gov/EGLE](https://Michigan.gov/EGLE)

List of Michigan Local Health Departments  
[Malph.org/Resources/Directory](http://Malph.org/Resources/Directory)



The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) does not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, genetic information, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs or disability.