

# Lead and Your Water

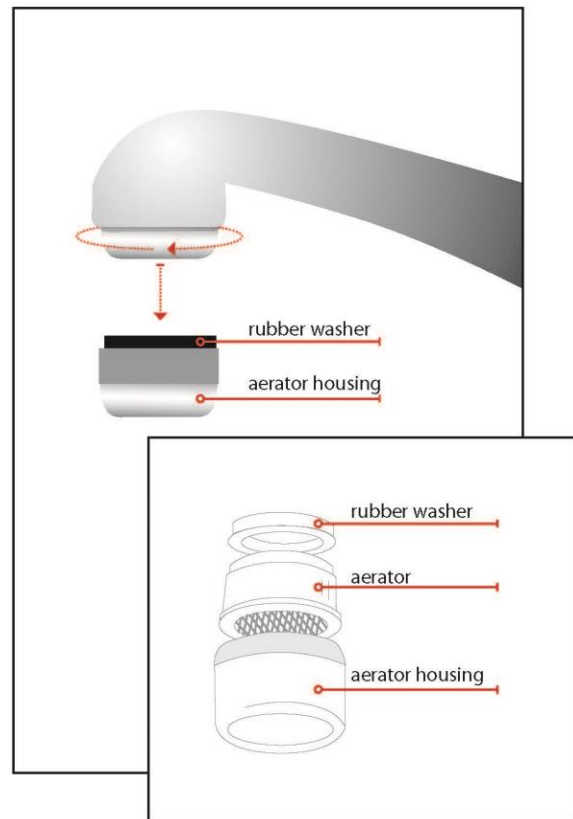
## Be Lead-Safe: Clean your aerators

Lead in tap water typically comes from either the pipe connecting older homes to the water system or from plumbing within the home itself. While water utilities can adjust water chemistry to help protect against lead dissolving or breaking off into the water, as long as lead materials are in contact with water, some risk of exposure remains.

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

Doing it 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 normally do the trick. 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 on to your faucet.
5. Run the water for 30 seconds to clear any residue. It's that easy!
6. Repeat this procedure every few weeks to prevent build-up.



*Image courtesy of DC Water*