

Grant to replace lead pipes and fittings

This document is a guide for homeowners about the Government's grant for replacing water-supply pipes made of lead. Homeowners are responsible for all pipes on their land and inside their house or apartment. This is advice and you should use it only as a guide.

The Government has made a plan to reduce people's contact with lead in drinking water. As part of this plan, you can now get a local authority grant to help replace drinking water lead pipes within the boundaries of your property (outside or inside your dwelling). This grant is available whether or not you are a customer of Irish Water.

Lead is a naturally occurring metal that was used for pipework and plumbing in some houses built up to, and including, the 1970s. Lead may get into your water if:

- the main pipe that leads from the road to your house is made fully or partly from lead;
- the plumbing and pipework in your house contains lead; or
- the fixtures and solder (a metal made of lead and tin or brass and silver, used in the past for jointing pipes) inside your house are made of lead.

Lead can damage people's health, depending on several factors:

- the amount of lead consumed;
- how long it has been consumed for; and
- at what age someone is exposed to it.

Infants, young children and pregnant women are at most risk. For example, long-term exposure to lead can affect the development of a child's brain, leading to problems with learning, behaviour and attention. It may also harm the kidneys and may contribute to high blood pressure.

For HSE information on lead in drinking water visit:
<http://www.hse.ie/eng/health/hl/water/drinkingwater/lead/>

Proof

To prove that pipe replacement is necessary, you must have a letter from your water supplier advising you that there is probably lead plumbing within the property or a certificate from a laboratory showing a lead level in your water that is higher than the current legal limit.

Suitable plumber

Any plumber or contractor you use must have a current Tax Clearance Certificate or a Revenue Online Service (ROS) printout of an eTax Clearance.



Irish Water customers

If you are a customer of Irish Water and you plan on replacing all the lead drinking water pipes within your property's boundary, you must apply for Irish Water's Customer Opt-In Lead Pipe Replacement Scheme before you replace the pipes. Under this scheme, Irish Water will replace any lead pipes on the public side of your property's boundary. Both sets of pipes (both inside and outside the boundaries of your property) must be replaced for your drinking water to have a lead level that will probably be below the legal limit.

For more information on **Irish Water's Customer Opt-In Lead Pipe Replacement Scheme**, visit www.water.ie/lead or call Irish Water on 1850 278 278 or +353 1 707 2828.

What does the grant cover?

The grant helps householders with the cost of replacing lead piping or fittings on their property – inside or outside the house. The pipes or fittings must already have been used for providing water for human consumption, food preparation or making drinks.

What does the grant not cover?

The grant does not cover the costs of pipe lining works (a method of repairing existing pipes) or fitting an under the sink filter system to filter water to remove the lead. It also does not cover the cost of works done at the same time as replacing pipes, for example, the costs of sinks, kitchen units, flooring and tiling.

How do I know if I am eligible for the grant?

To be eligible for the grant:

- the property must be your principal private residence (main home);
- you must own the residence; and
- replacement works must cost at least €200.

How much grant aid can I get?

The level of the grant you may get depends on your household's total income in the previous tax year.

| Gross household income (income before tax) | Percentage of approved costs* covered by the grant | Maximum grant available |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| Income of up to €50,000 | 80% | €4,000 |
| €50,000 - €75,000 | 50% | €2,500 |
| Over €75,000 | None | None |

*Approved costs mean either the cost:

- of replacing the lead pipes or fittings used for water within the boundary of the property (inside or outside the house); or
- that the local authority believes is reasonable for such works – whichever is the lesser.

How do I submit my application?

Send your application to your local authority. If you need help completing an application form, please contact your local authority.

The local authority will process applications as quickly as possible. It has the right to check the works and information or supporting documents you provide with your application form. The local authority can reject applications if you apply using false or misleading information or documents.

What do I need to give the local authority when applying for a grant?

You need to give the local authority six items

1. A completed application form

You can download a combined leaflet and application form by:

- visiting www.housing.gov.ie/water/water-quality/lead-drinking-water; or
- through your local authority's website.

2. Documents showing lead plumbing or lead levels

You must include **one** of the following documents:

- a letter from your water supplier (Irish Water or a group water scheme) advising you that there is probably lead plumbing within the property; or
- a certificate received from a laboratory, issued no earlier than six months before you send your application form, showing a lead level in your property's water supply that is higher than the current legal limit of 10µg/l (micrograms per litre).

The laboratory must be accredited by the Irish National Accreditation Board (for information, <http://www.inab.ie>) for testing lead in drinking water.

3. Evidence of income

You must show evidence of income for the person applying and their spouse or partner in the previous tax year.

- If you are a PAYE (Pay As You Earn) worker – a PAYE Balancing Statement from the Revenue Commissioners, or a similar statement or letter from the Revenue Commissioners.
- If you are self-employed, a Notice of Income Tax Assessment from the Revenue Commissioners, or a similar signed statement or letter from the Revenue Commissioners. The statement must show your taxable income for the year before the year that the pipe replacement works were carried out.
- If you receive social welfare – a statement of taxable income from the Department of Social Protection.

4. Contractor receipts

- You must include a receipt from each contractor who performed the replacement or repair works. Receipts must include details of the works and costs.

5. A statement of confirmation from contractors

- You must include a statement from contractors that any materials used for the work, including pipes or fittings were of appropriate quality and that there was a proper standard of workmanship involved.

6. Tax clearance

- You must include a copy of a current Tax Clearance Certificate or a Revenue On-Line Service (ROS) printout of an eTax Clearance, issued by the Revenue Commissioners, for each contractor who performed the replacement or repair works.

Remember, you must include all six items when submitting an application form.

Frequently Asked Questions

I live in housing owned by a local authority or provided by an approved housing body. Can I apply for the grant?

No. If you live in a property owned by a local authority or an approved housing body and think you have lead piping, please tell the organisation that owns the property.

The Government's plan for reducing people's exposure to lead in drinking water says that accommodation providers should check their housing for any lead pipework or plumbing and then take appropriate action to remove it, if possible.

I am a tenant of a private landlord. Can I apply?

No. Only a homeowner can apply for the grant and the property must be the homeowner's principal private residence (main home). Please contact your landlord if you have concerns about lead piping in your home.

When do works have to be done in order to be eligible for the grant?

Work must have been done since 5 February 2016.



How can I get my water tested?

You can get your water tested through a laboratory approved for testing for lead in drinking water. If testing, you should take a sample before and after water has been flushed through the pipe for three minutes. A single test for water may not provide a true measure of lead levels in your drinking water. Prices differ for different laboratories. It is best to ring around for prices.

For a full list of Irish National Accreditation Board approved laboratories, visit:
www.inab.ie/Directory-of-Accredited-Bodies/Laboratory-Accreditation/Testing/

How do I check if I have lead pipes?

First, if you are an Irish Water customer whose property was metered, you may have received a letter telling you that you may have a lead pipe connection.

Look for the point where the water pipe enters the house and check as much of the pipe as possible. Lead pipes are usually dark grey or black (unless painted) with a dull coating and the joints appear to be 'swollen'. A simple way of identifying lead is to scrape the pipe gently with a coin or a knife. If a shiny silver strip is revealed, then the pipe is probably made of lead.

If the plumbing in your property has been upgraded or replaced, you should still check the pipe running from the water main to your kitchen tap. Small amounts of lead piping in the system might remain. As a guide, other pipe materials have the following appearances:

- copper – bright or dull orange colour, and hard;
- iron – dark, very hard, and may be rusty; and
- plastic – may be grey, black or blue.

If you are in any doubt, you should employ a qualified plumber to check the type of pipework in your premises.

What materials should contractors use for replacement pipes?

Irish Water recommends polyethylene (PE) pipes for water supply pipes. All PE water supply pipes should be either:

- PE-100 with an SDR (standard dimension ratio) rating of 17 and conforming to I.S. EN 12201-2:2011; or
- PE-80 with an SDR rating of 11 and conforming to I.S. EN 12201-2:2011.

All PE pipes water supply pipes should:

- be blue, black or black with blue stripes;
- have an outside diameter of at least 20mm; and
- have an inside diameter of at least 15mm.

For further guidance on what your qualified plumber should do when replacing lead pipes, please read 'Replacement of Lead Supply Pipes – Guidance Note' published by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, available at:
www.housing.gov.ie/water/water-quality/lead-drinking-water



From left to right: copper, lead, hydrodare (plastic) pipes

Who do I contact in Irish Water about getting the pipes on the public side replaced?

For more information on Irish Water's Customer Opt-In Lead Pipe Replacement Scheme, visit www.water.ie/lead or call Irish Water on 1850 278 278 or +353 1 707 2828.

Is there any other support for replacing lead pipes?

The Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) provides tax relief in the form of an income tax credit of 13.5% of qualifying expenditure on repairs, renovations or improvement works to a person's main home or rental property.

The works must cost at least €4,405 (before VAT) and works must be done by HRI-qualifying contractors. The replacement of lead pipes and any associated plumbing, landscaping or driveway repairs may qualify as works under this scheme.

For more information, visit: www.revenue.ie

Can I apply for the grant and the Home Renovation Incentive?

Yes. You can claim both the grant for lead pipework replacement and the HRI tax relief if your income is below €75,000. The grant is not available to households with income over €75,000. However, there are no similar restrictions on the HRI.

If you claim both the grant and the HRI tax relief, the qualifying expenditure for the HRI tax relief is reduced by three times the grant amount (see the examples in the right-hand panel). This only applies where the grant and the tax relief have both been claimed – if you are not eligible for the grant, the reduction will not apply to the tax relief.

For more information, visit www.revenue.ie

Examples of tax relief when you apply for the grant and HRI

You spend €13,000 (before VAT) on lead pipe replacement works.

You receive a grant of €4,000 (maximum grant available).

Under the HRI, you may also apply for 13.5% tax relief on some of the money you spent.

Example 1

First you must multiply the grant by three and subtract this from the amount you spent:

- €4,000 (grant) x 3 = €12,000
- €13,000 (money you spent) minus €12,000 = €1,000.

This means you can apply for 13.5% tax relief on €1,000, which means you will receive €135 under the HRI scheme.

Example 2

If you spent €15,000, it would be:

- €4,000 (grant) x 3 = €12,000
- €15,000 (money you spent) minus €12,000 = €3,000.

This means you can apply for 13.5% tax relief on €3,000, which means you will receive €405 under the HRI scheme.

The HRI tax credit applies for any number of approved works done on a property until 31 December 2018.