

What is Plumbosolvency and are there any Health Risks?

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Plumbosolvent waters are slightly acidic waters that can dissolve metals that they come into contact with. This can result in small amounts of heavy metals entering the water supply. Heavy metals commonly dissolved in drinking-water from household plumbing fittings include lead, nickel, cadmium and copper.

What are the health risks?

Heavy metals are a health concern whether they come from drinking-water, air or food. The Ministry of Health believes that the risk from heavy metals in drinking-water is small.

However, as a precaution it is recommended by the Ministry of Health that all households flush a mugful (500ml) of water from their drinking-water tap each morning to eliminate the risk.

Infants, children and pregnant women are more susceptible to the toxic effects of heavy metals, so steps should be taken to reduce heavy metal concentrations in water that may be consumed by this group.

Does it matter if I am on public or private water supplies?

No. Flushing of taps is recommended for all households, including those on public and private water supplies.

Is there a problem with the water supply?

No. This is not about the chemical quality of the drinking-water supply but about whether the water has had prolonged contact with metals.

How do I know whether or not my water is plumbosolvent?

All water supplies in New Zealand are considered to be plumbosolvent until the water supplier can show that their supply is not plumbosolvent.

For water supplies considered to be plumbosolvent, under the Drinking Water Standards for New Zealand 2005 The Ministry of Health requires the water supplier to alert residents to the issue of plumbosolvency. This may be done through publishing twice a year, for supplies servicing more than 1000 people, a public notice provided by the Ministry of Health.