



Barry-Eaton District Health Department

Be Active • Be Safe • Be Healthy

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Wednesday, November 20th, 2019

Elevated Copper Levels found in City of Charlotte Drinking Water

Earlier this month, elevated levels of copper in drinking water was found in select locations served by the City of Charlotte's municipal water supply. Elevated copper levels were identified through routine water testing performed by the City of Charlotte. Barry-Eaton District Health Department (BEDHD) is partnering with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and the City of Charlotte to provide education for the community on copper levels in drinking water.

While copper is a necessary element for human health, exposure to too much copper can negatively impact health. Drinking water with elevated levels of copper may cause upset stomach, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps. Certain groups of people may be at greater risk of more severe symptoms when exposed to elevated levels of copper. Infants under the age of one who use powdered infant formula may experience upset stomach or other health issues, as formula already contains the correct amount of copper for a healthy diet. Other people with rare genetic diseases such as Wilson's disease can have trouble getting rid of extra copper from their body. These individuals should talk with their health care provider for further guidance.

Individuals and families can take precautions to reduce their exposure to copper.

- Flush the pipes. If water has not been used for several hours, flush your pipes for about 2 minutes to reduce copper in your water. Pipes can be flushed by turning a faucet on all the way until the water turns cold, taking a shower, or even running a load of laundry or the dishes. After flushing, drinking water is unlikely to contain high levels of copper.
- Avoid drinking hot water from the tap. Hot water is more likely to contain high levels of copper.
- Opt to use a water filter. Water filters with the certification number "NSF/ANSI Standard 53" and information on the box that mentions copper are suitable for use. Follow the manufacturer's instructions to install and use the filter.
- Do not use water with high levels of copper to prepare powdered infant formula.
- Do not boil the water. Copper is not removed from water by boiling, and boiling can actually raise the level of copper.
- Clean faucet aerators at least once every six months.

More information about copper can be found on the City of Charlotte's website at <http://www.charlottemi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Copper-FAQ-Sheet.pdf>. Individuals or family members who may be experiencing symptoms of exposure to high copper levels (especially formula-fed infants and individuals with genetic disorders affecting copper) should contact their healthcare provider. For general water quality questions and information on water testing, contact BEDHD's Environmental Health division at 517-541-2615. MDHHS is also able to respond to questions about copper exposure and health by calling 844-934-1315.

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