

# Experts urge lead tests for household taps

By Nanci Hellmich  
USA TODAY

Your tap water at home may have too much lead in it, and the only way to know for sure is to have it tested, says the February *Consumer Reports*, out today.

Experts tested the lead levels of water in the homes of 2,643 subscribers. They examined both first-draw samples (water that has stood in the pipes for hours) and purge-line samples (water that has run for a minute).

The findings: 4% of the first-draw water samples exceeded the Environmental Protection Agency's remedial action level of 15 parts per billion. CR editors say any lead is too much.

Despite the small percentage, the report recommends that "every household test its water for lead."

"If you have 100 million households, that means 4 million of them" have too much lead in the water, says CR's Edward Groth. Testing is especially important for homes with infants, young kids and pregnant women. If the level is high, a blood test can show whether anyone has been overexposed.

Lead exposure is considered the No. 1 environmental health threat to children and can cause brain damage, hearing problems and smaller stature.

Lead gets into tap water as the water passes through lead service lines, lead-soldered joints and lead-containing brass or bronze fixtures.

Although letting tap water run for a minute or two is a standard remedy for reducing lead levels, it's not always effective, says the report.

Physician John Graef, chief of the Lead and Toxicology Clinic at Children's Hospital in Boston, agrees. "Lead testing is an inexpensive way to be sure that your water system is OK."

The magazine also looked at about 200 households in eight cities and found:

► Chicago and Boston had the most households with high levels of lead, both in first-draw and purged-line tests. Next: San Francisco, Washing-

## Mail-order water tests

Here are three mail-order labs that *Consumer Reports* says do reliable water tests for lead. Prices are for two samples, first-draw and purged-line water:

► **Clean Water Fund**, Asheville, N.C., 704-251-0518, \$12.

► **Suburban Water Testing Labs**, Reading, Pa., 800-433-6595, \$35.

► **National Testing Laboratories**, Cleveland, Ohio, 800-458-3330, \$58.

## Herpes may add to heart risk

By Tim Friend  
USA TODAY

MONTEREY, Calif. — The herpes virus can induce blockages and clotting in blood vessels and may be an important link in the development of heart disease, new research suggests.

The test-tube findings, presented at the American Heart Association's science writers forum, have not been shown yet in people. But they offer a clue why many people with no risk factors get blocked arteries and reveal key insights into the basic processes of blockages and blood clots. They also strengthen the idea that blood vessel disease is an inflammatory condition.

"This doesn't mean everyone with a cold sore or genital herpes is going to die of a heart attack," says researcher David Hajjar, Cornell University Medical College, New York. "But (the research) does suggest that herpes may injure the vessel wall and let other things take hold."

Hajjar says people who have