

Cleaning Your Aerators

Clean your aerators every 6 months:

When pipes are old, they break apart more easily. Sometimes pipes break completely; sometimes they just get new cracks. This can cause bits of lead pipe to end up in our home's water. There are screens - called aerators - on our faucets that sometimes stop the larger pieces from coming out. Aerators help save water - so it's good to have them - but cleaning them every 6 months helps to limit the lead that could end up in your water.

Follow the steps below to learn how to clean your aerators:

1.



- The little round thing on the bottom of your faucet is the aerator (pronounced: *air-raytor*).
- Unscrew the aerator from the bottom of the faucet.
- You should be able to unscrew it with your fingers, but you might need a wrench if it's really stuck.

2.



- Your aerator might not look exactly the same as this, but it's okay.
- Now that you have it off, let's get started.

3.



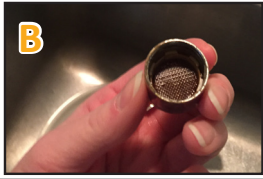
- While you really only need to use water to rinse off your aerator parts, if you have these things around, they might make it easier:
 - An old toothbrush
 - A glass of vinegar

4.



- Soaking the aerator in vinegar will help loosen up some of the grime. You can leave it in as long as you want, but even just 5 minutes will help.
- The toothbrush makes it easy to scrub out the inside. Just don't use that toothbrush for brushing your teeth again.

5.



- If your aerator looks like Photo A, it has a flow control piece in it. You'll have to take it apart:
 - Pull out the pieces carefully.
 - Note the order that the pieces come out. Take a picture or write down some notes. You'll have to put them back in at the end in the same way.
- If it looks like Photo B, then you're good to go to Step 6.

6.



- You might not have all of these pieces. They might not be this color. Every aerator is a little different. Just clean what you have.
- Scrub all the pieces. Make sure you really get down inside the metal piece, removing any bits of grime or metal flakes you can see.

7.



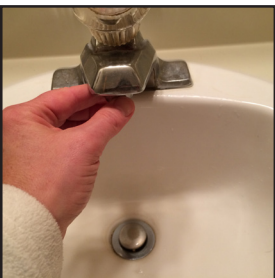
- Rinse everything very well.
- Run the water through the aerator screen - holding it right side up and upside down.

8.



- Once it's clean,
 - If your aerator looks like Photo A in step 5, put it back together.
 - If it looks like Photo B, you're all set.

9.



- Put your aerator back on your faucet.
- Repeat these steps every 6 months. This will make sure pieces of lead and other metal from pipes aren't getting stuck in your faucet and possibly putting lead into your water.