

Types of Plumbing Pipes and Their Lifespans



Image: ilovebutter/Flickr

Knowing the types of plumbing pipes in your home lets you take steps to prevent leaks, flooding, and potential health hazards.

Nothing lasts forever, and that includes the **plumbing pipes** in your home. Fortunately, the majority of pipe materials perform well for decades. However, when that lifespan is reached, pipes may start to **leak**.

To prevent leaks, use the chart below to determine if your home's plumbing lifespan is adequate or if water pipes are bursting for attention.

To prevent health hazards, check for lead pipes.

Know Your Pipes

Review the home inspection report you got when you bought your home to see what kind of pipes you have—or bring in a licensed plumber to do an inspection of your plumbing system. Expect to pay at least \$75 for a plumber's service call.

Your Plumbing Lifespan

Supply pipes (under constant pressure and therefore most likely to cause water damage when they leak)	Brass	40-70+ yrs
	Copper	50+ yrs
	Galvanized Steel	20-50 yrs
Drain lines	Cast iron	75-100 yrs
	Polyvinyl chloride (known as PVC)	Indefinitely

If your pipes are older than these guidelines from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development **Residential Rehabilitation Inspection Guide**, it doesn't necessarily mean they need to be replaced. **Well-maintained pipes** may last longer, and poorly maintained ones or those in areas with hard water (meaning it has high mineral content), may fail sooner.

Check for Polybutylene

Polybutylene piping--a gray, plastic plumbing material used from the 1970s through the 1990s--is extremely prone to breakage. It's commonly



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