

Polybutylene vs. PEX Pipes

Polybutylene pipe was commonly used from 1978 – 1995 and is a gray flexible pipe.

PEX is a plastic flexible pipe that comes in white, blue, orange, red and a translucent milky white clear. This piping came about to replace polybutylene plumbing.

**As a general rule, the flexible pipe will be:
Polybutylene if installed before 1993
PEX if installed after 1998**

The 5 years in between could be either so rely on color and lettering on the pipe to identify which type it is.

Polybutylene may exist throughout the home (more commonly in mobile homes and commercial construction like condos) but may have also been used for a plumbing upgrade during that timeframe (ex: adding a water softener to the original plumbing system)

Leaks are inevitable with any plumbing system; however, polybutylene degrades faster than the rest of the approved piping list and in some areas the deterioration is significantly quicker. The lifespan of polybutylene piping is 15 years. It deteriorates/flakes from the inside so unless a section is cut and examined, the homeowner will not know the extent of the damage. Chemicals in the water are believed to contribute to the deterioration (including over-chlorination).

The image on the right illustrates the deterioration of a Polybutylene pipe.

If you have any questions about account eligibility or need assistance in determining the type of pipe used in a risk you are quoting, please contact a Personal Lines Underwriter.

