



Is Drinking Water Safe in Your Schools?

Awareness about drinking water has increased due to the Flint, Michigan, water crisis and other news coverage involving high lead levels found in drinking water at schools countrywide.

When lead is found in tap water it is typically due to leaching from internal plumbing materials. Factors that may contribute to a lead problem in drinking water include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Lead piping. The use of lead pipes has been banned since 1986.
- Copper pipes joined by lead solder. Lead solder has been banned since 1986.
- Brass pipes, faucets, fittings and valves that contain lead alloys.
- The supplied water is too corrosive.
- Lead sediments in faucet screens.
- Water coolers that contain lead parts or have lead-lined water tanks.

Testing Your Drinking Water

You cannot see, taste, or smell lead in water, so testing is the only sure way to check for elevated lead levels.

School districts with their own water source, typically a well, are required to test their water. If this applies to your district, it is suggested that you consult your territorial health department for direction about water quality and testing requirements. Find contact information for your state or territorial health department:

- New York: <http://tinyurl.com/zpretwc>
- All other states: <http://tinyurl.com/7l877vp>

There are no state or federal testing requirements for schools on municipal water systems. The municipality is required to test for lead exposure in water at the source point (i.e., the water treatment plant), but not at the end source (i.e., school faucets, drinking fountains, etc.). However, many schools on municipal water systems are voluntarily choosing to test the quality of their drinking water at the end source. If this applies to your school, it is suggested that you work closely with your territorial health department and use a laboratory certified to perform water testing. Find labs certified to test for lead in drinking water at <http://tinyurl.com/j3nyv3d>

Additional Information

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) "3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water" provides information about drinking water quality in schools, testing and conducting sampling. It also discusses routine control measures, short-term control measures and permanent remedies to help reduce or eliminate the sources of lead in drinking water. Access "3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water" at <http://tinyurl.com/hzwyuyq>