

# ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

Dear School Administrator,

The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) has been notified by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality that water in one or more of the fixtures in your school contained lead at a level higher than the screening level of 15 parts per billion (ppb). We understand that this information may cause concern for your staff, students, and parents and we are committed to providing health information to help explain the situation and address these concerns.

Most importantly, we want to assure you that the school's water is safe for handwashing, cleaning, and toilet use. Moreover, drinking water is not a common source of lead poisoning in Arizona. The drinking water at your school is not likely to cause lead poisoning in your students and staff due to the limited amount of water the individuals are likely to drink from school water sources each day.

Enclosed is a health communication toolkit for your reference. It contains the following documents:

- Top Ten List: Things to Know If Elevated Lead Levels Are Detected in Your School Water
- FAQs for Parents
- FAQs for School Staff
- Talking points to support calls from parents or media
- [Fact sheet on lead poisoning in Arizona](#)

We understand that the wellbeing of your students and staff are of utmost importance to you and recognize that your school serves as more than just a place of learning for your community. As such, we are committed to supporting your health information needs. If you require additional information or clarification or have specific questions not addressed within these resources, please contact the ADHS Office of Environmental Health at 602-364-3118 or email us at [healthyhomes@azdhs.gov](mailto:healthyhomes@azdhs.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink.

Cara Christ, MD, MS  
Director  
Arizona Department of Health Services

Douglas A. Ducey | Governor   Cara M. Christ, MD, MS | Director

## **Arizona Public School Drinking Water Lead Screening Program**

### **Top Ten List: Things to Know If Elevated Lead Levels Are Detected in Your School Water**

- 1. This project was not started because of any indication of a potential problem.**  
The Arizona public school drinking water lead screening project was started to proactively detect lead in water in schools so that schools are aware of potential problems and can take action to address these problems. The Arizona Department of Health Services has never identified a drinking water source as the major contributor to elevated blood lead levels.
- 2. A lead level of more than 15 parts per billion (ppb) in water is a signal for a school to take action to reduce lead in water.**  
The 15 ppb level is considered an “action level.” When levels of more than 15 ppb are found, this is a signal for a school to take steps to reduce lead in water. This level is not a measure of the lead present in the water during continued use throughout the school day. This level was measured when water was sitting in the pipes for a period of several hours without being used in order to get an idea of what the highest level of lead in the water is likely to be.
- 3. Lead detected in water sources at your child’s school is not likely to be primary cause of lead poisoning.**  
Most school-age children don’t drink a lot of water from school drinking fountains. Children usually drink more water at home or bring their own water bottles to school. That means that any water found to be above lead screening values during this project would be only a small fraction of potential lead sources children may be exposed to and not likely to be a major contributor to lead poisoning.
- 4. The lead found in water at school is not likely to have come from the water itself.**  
Typically, lead leaches out of plumbing and building fixtures, including lead solder used on pipes. If water is corrosive, or has low mineral content, it can cause lead from these fixtures to leach into the water. This is a greater risk for plumbing systems built before 1986. Arizona’s water is considered to be hard water. The minerals in hard water eventually coat the inside of the pipes and prevent lead from dissolving into the water. More lead is leached out of pipes and solder when the water stays in pipes for a long time, and when the water is acidic, soft, and hot.
- 5. It is safe for your child to continue using water at school for handwashing and showering.**  
In most cases, lead only causes a health concern if it is eaten, drank, or breathed in in high levels. Flushing a toilet, washing hands, cleaning a wound, or showering with water that has lead levels above 15 ppb will not increase your child’s exposure to lead. If lead was found in a water source at your school that your child does not drink from or is not used to prepare your child’s food, it is unlikely that your child has been exposed to lead from water at school.

**6. Drinking water is NOT a common source of lead in Arizona.**

Drinking water contributes only a small fraction of potential lead exposure in Arizona. Here, the most common sources of lead include lead-based paint in houses built before 1978, and some household products including antique or imported toys, antique furniture, imported spices and candies, “home remedies,” and lead-glazed pottery used for cooking.

**7. Young children are most at risk of lead poisoning and its effects.**

Children six years and younger are most at risk for lead poisoning because they are experiencing rapid growth and brain development. In addition, younger children are more likely to put things in their mouths, including items contaminated with lead, which gives them more opportunity for exposure to lead. Because of this, screening is recommended for young children between 12 and 24 months who live in high-risk zip codes. These zip codes can be found at [www.azhealth.gov/lead](http://www.azhealth.gov/lead).

**8. Blood lead levels can decrease over time if an individual is no longer exposed to lead.**

While eating, drinking or breathing high levels of lead over time can lead to high levels of lead in the blood, especially in very young children, these blood lead levels can decrease over time. If you or your child have high blood lead levels, identifying the source of lead in your environment and removing that source can reduce blood lead levels and stop further health effects of lead poisoning.

**9. The Childhood Lead Poisoning Program at the Arizona Department of Health Services can answer your questions.**

This program receives reports of blood lead levels in Arizona children and provides follow-up with healthcare providers and families for children with elevated levels. When a child is identified with elevated blood lead levels, the program will coordinate follow-up testing and work with families to identify the source of lead. Resources and information are available at [www.azhealth.gov/lead](http://www.azhealth.gov/lead), by calling 602-364-3118, or by emailing [healthyhomes@azdhs.gov](mailto:healthyhomes@azdhs.gov).

**10. If you are still concerned about whether your child may be lead poisoned, a simple blood test can help.**

Because drinking water is not a common source of lead in Arizona, we do NOT recommend that your child receives a blood lead test based on elevated levels of lead at his/her school. However, if you are concerned that your child may be exposed to other sources of lead at home, your healthcare provider can help you get your child’s blood tested to determine whether there is a potential health concern due to lead.



## **Arizona Public School Drinking Water Lead Screening Program Frequently Asked Questions for Parents**

### **If my child was exposed to lead at school, what are the primary health concerns?**

It is unlikely that your child will experience health issues as a result of exposure to drinking water at school. In general, infants, toddlers, and pre-school age children are most at risk for lead poisoning because they are still developing, have a tendency to put objects in their mouths, and absorb lead easily. In children, lead poisoning can cause slowed development, reading and other learning problems, behavior problems, as well as brain, liver, and kidney damage. Pregnant women can also pass lead to their unborn babies.

### **How can I tell if my child is suffering from lead poisoning?**

It is unlikely that your child is suffering from lead poisoning as a result of exposure to drinking water at school. However, other sources of lead are present in Arizona, which your child may be exposed to. These include lead-based paint in houses built before 1978, and some household products including antique or imported toys, antique furniture, imported spices and candies, home remedies, and lead-glazed pottery used for cooking. Most children with lead poisoning look healthy and show no signs of illness. The only way to detect lead poisoning is by asking your doctor to perform a simple blood test. This is not recommended solely based on elevated levels of lead found in your school's water.

### **The lead levels at my child's school are above 15ppb (parts per billion). Should I be concerned?**

Lead in water measured above 15 ppb does not necessarily mean a child will have elevated blood lead levels in their body. The 15 ppb level is considered an "action level." When levels of more than 15 ppb are found, this is a signal for a school to take steps to reduce lead in water. In addition, the lead level is not a measure of the lead present in the water during continued use throughout the school day. This level was measured when water was sitting in the pipes for a period of several hours without being used in order to get an idea of what the highest level of lead in the water is likely to be.

Children's exposure to lead in drinking water at their school is only a small part of their overall potential exposure. In fact, 15 ppb is a level set by the Environmental Protection Agency for lead in tap water within homes. Individuals are much more likely to drink and cook with water from their home in larger quantities than they are at school.

### **Where did the lead in the school's water come from?**

When lead is detected, it does not usually come from the water itself. Typically, the lead leaches out of plumbing and building fixtures, like lead solder used on pipes. If water is corrosive, or has low mineral content, it can cause lead from these fixtures to leach into the water. Over time, the Environmental Protection Agency has updated regulations about lead-containing fixtures or solder. Solder and plumbing fixtures containing lead are more common in plumbing systems put in place prior to 1986.



### **Is it safe for my child to wash his or her hands or shower at school?**

Yes, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, bathing and showering should be safe for students and staff, even if the water contains lead over 15 ppb. Human skin does not absorb lead from water. Water at school can also be used to wash hands or clean cuts or scrapes. Washing hands or wounds with water at your school will not significantly increase your child's risk of lead poisoning.

### **Should I be concerned with lead in drinking water?**

Drinking water is not a common source of lead in Arizona. In Arizona, the most common sources of lead include lead-based paint in houses built before 1978, and some household products including antique or imported toys, antique furniture, imported spices and candies, "home remedies," and lead-glazed pottery used for cooking.

### **Do I need to get my child(ren) tested for lead exposure?**

It is not recommended that you get your child tested for lead exposure based on a lead reading above 15 ppb in water at your child's school. However, if you are concerned your child has been exposed to lead from additional sources in your home or community, you can talk to your doctor about a simple blood test to determine if your child has lead in his/her body.

### **What can I do to protect my family from lead exposure?**

While your school is working to address lead levels detected in water at their facility, there are several things you can do to reduce potential lead exposures to your family outside of school:

- Check your home for items that may contain lead. Wash your child's hands often, especially after playing outside and before eating.
- If your work or hobby involves working with lead, change clothes and shower before entering your home. Wash clothes separately. Leave shoes/boots outside or in the garage to avoid bringing in soil and dust.
- Mop hard floors and wet-wipe surfaces to contain lead dust. Avoid sweeping or dry dusting.
- Hire an EPA-certified firm when renovating or repairing pre-1978 homes. EPA-certified firms are trained and certified to work lead-safe. Find a list of certified contractors on the EPA website.

Contact the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program if you would like help in identifying sources in your home that may have lead at [healthyhomes@azdhs.gov](mailto:healthyhomes@azdhs.gov) or 602-364-3118.

### **Lead was found in my child's school. Do I need to have my home's water tested?**

Most water systems serving homes in Arizona are tested regularly for lead. However, depending on when your home was built, you may be exposed to lead in your home's water from your pipes. The best way to find out if your household tap water contains lead is to get your water tested by a lab that is certified to test household tap water for lead. Certified labs reliably test water at an affordable cost.



Mail-in and drop-off options are available. For a list of commercial laboratories that can test your water:

1. Contact the Arizona Department of Health Services, State Laboratory Services at 602-364-0720.
2. Find certified environmental laboratories on the ADHS webpage at <https://app.azdhs.gov/bfs/labs/elbis/drinkingwatertestinglabs/drinkingwatersearchcontentpage.aspx>

### **What can I do to help reduce exposure to lead in tap water at my home?**

If you have, or suspect that you have lead in your tap water, there are a few things you can do to reduce lead exposure:

- Before using any tap water for drinking or cooking, flush your water system by running the kitchen tap (or any other tap you take drinking or cooking water from) on COLD for 30 seconds to 2 minutes.
- Never use hot water from the faucet for drinking or cooking, especially when making baby formula or food for infants. Boiling water will not remove lead.
- Inspect your faucet aerator. The aerator on the end of your faucet is a screen that can catch debris, including particles of lead. It is recommended you periodically remove the aerator and rinse out any debris.
- Install a home water filter that is NSF-certified for lead removal. Maintain the water filters according to the manufacturer's instructions.



## **Arizona Public School Drinking Water Lead Screening Program Frequently Asked Questions for Schools**

### **If people were exposed to lead at our school, what are the primary health concerns?**

It is unlikely that people will experience health issues as a result of exposure to drinking water at school. In general, young children are most at risk for lead poisoning because they are still developing, have a tendency to put objects in their mouths, and absorb lead easily. In children, lead poisoning can cause slowed development, reading and other learning problems, behavior problems, as well as brain, liver, and kidney damage. Pregnant women can also pass lead to their unborn babies.

### **How can I tell if a child or staff member at our school is suffering from lead poisoning?**

It is unlikely that anyone is suffering from lead poisoning as a result of exposure to drinking water at school. However, other sources of lead are present in Arizona, which people may be exposed to. These include lead-based paint in houses built before 1978, and some household products including antique or imported toys, antique furniture, imported spices and candies, home remedies, and lead-glazed pottery used for cooking. Most people with lead poisoning look healthy and show no signs of illness. The only way to detect lead poisoning is by asking a doctor to perform a simple blood test. This is not recommended solely based on elevated levels of lead found in your school's water.

### **The lead levels at our school are above 15 ppb (parts per billion). Should we be concerned?**

Lead in water measured above 15 ppb does not necessarily mean people will have elevated blood lead levels in their bodies. The 15 ppb level is considered an "action level." When levels of more than 15 ppb are found, this is a signal for a school to take steps to reduce lead in water. In addition, the lead level is not a measure of the lead present in the water during continued use throughout the school day. This level was measured when water was sitting in the pipes for a period of several hours without being used in order to get an idea of what the highest level of lead in the water is likely to be.

People's exposure to lead in drinking water at a school is only a small part of their overall potential exposure. In fact, 15 ppb is a level set by the Environmental Protection Agency for lead in tap water within homes. Individuals are much more likely to drink and cook with water from their home in larger quantities than they are at school.

### **Where did the lead in the school's water come from?**

When lead is detected, it does not usually come from the water itself. Typically, the lead leaches out of plumbing and building fixtures, like lead solder used on pipes. If water is corrosive, or has low mineral content, it can cause lead from these fixtures to leach into the water. Over time, the Environmental Protection Agency has updated regulations about lead-containing fixtures or solder. Solder and plumbing fixtures containing lead are more common in plumbing systems put in place prior to 1986.



### **Is it safe for people to wash their hands or shower at school?**

Yes, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, bathing and showering should be safe for students and staff, even if the water contains lead over 15 ppb. Human skin does not absorb lead from water. Water at school can also be used to wash hands or clean cuts or scrapes. Washing hands or wounds with water at your school will not significantly increase a child's risk of lead poisoning.

### **Is it safe to use our school's water at the nurse's station?**

Water at school can be used to wash hands, clean cuts or scrapes, or other wound care. Washing hands or wounds with water at your school will not significantly increase a child's risk of lead poisoning. Bottled water is recommended for drinking or dispensing medications.

### **Is it safe for our cafeteria to use our school's water to cook with?**

If elevated lead levels were found in the building that houses your school's cafeteria, it is recommended that you use another source of water, like commercially bottled water, to prepare food that is likely to absorb water. For example, you should not cook pasta or clean porous foods like berries with water containing elevated lead levels, but it would be acceptable to rinse fresh, uncut produce like apples or oranges with the water. If you are using school water to rinse fresh produce, flush the faucet first by running it on cold for 30 seconds to 2 minutes 1-2 minutes before using it. You may also consider installing a NSF-certified filter to remove lead.

### **Is it safe to use our school's water to wash dishes?**

Yes, it is safe to use your school's water to wash dishes, even if the dishwashing water source comes from a building found to have elevated levels of lead. It is recommended that you let the water run on cold for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before you begin washing dishes.

### **Is it safe for our janitorial staff to clean with the water at our school?**

Yes, even if elevated levels of lead are found in the building your janitorial staff uses to get water for mopping or cleaning, you can still use that water. Lead is not absorbed through the skin. It must be eaten, drank, or inhaled at elevated levels to cause health effects. Therefore, it is appropriate for your janitorial staff to continue using your school's water for cleaning floors or surfaces.

### **Is it safe to use water in our classrooms for educational purposes (e.g., boiling it for a science class)?**

Yes, as long as no individuals are drinking the water or using it for cooking as part of the class activity, the water is safe to use. Boiling the water will not remove the lead from the water, but it also will not cause increased health concerns for staff or students.

### **Is it safe for students or staff to drink the water at our school?**

While the levels of lead detected in the water at school are not likely to pose a health concern, we recommend that no one drinks from any water sources in a building found to have elevated levels of lead in that water. Students and staff who will not have access to other drinking water sources on campus with less than 15 ppb of lead should bring water from home or drink bottled water.



### **What can our school do to reduce levels of lead in drinking water?**

If the lead levels in your school drinking water are higher than the action level of 15 ppb, your school should work to determine the source of lead. There are a number of ways lead levels can be reduced in school drinking water, such as initiating a flushing program, or by replacing pipes and fixtures. Below are some ways in which you can reduce levels of lead in your drinking water:

- Let the water run 30 seconds to 2 minutes prior to using a fountain or a faucet for drinking or food preparation to reduce lead levels in the water;
- Install a NSF-certified filters to remove lead;
- Clean aerators on a quarterly basis – more if debris buildup is observed
- Remove or replace fixtures that leach lead
- Flush the piping system in the building
- Repair the plumbing system

### **Do students or staff at our school need to be tested for lead exposure?**

It is not recommended that students or staff are tested for lead exposure based on a lead reading above 15 ppb in water at your school. However, if anyone is concerned about being exposed to lead from additional sources in their home or community, they can talk to their doctor about a simple blood test.

### **What are the common sources of lead in Arizona?**

Drinking water is not a common source of lead in Arizona. In Arizona, the most common sources of lead include lead-based paint in houses built before 1978, and some household products including antique or imported toys, antique furniture, imported spices and candies, "home remedies," and lead-glazed pottery used for cooking.

### **What can our families do to protect themselves from lead exposure at home?**

While your school is working to address elevated lead levels detected in water at your facility, there are several things families can do to reduce potential lead exposures outside of school. You can advise families to:

- Check their homes for items that may contain lead. Wash their children's hands often, especially after playing outside and before eating.
- If their work or hobby involves working with lead, change clothes and shower before entering the home. Wash clothes separately. Leave shoes/boots outside or in the garage to avoid bringing in soil and dust.
- Mop hard floors and wet-wipe surfaces to contain lead dust. Avoid sweeping or dry dusting.
- Hire an EPA-certified firm when renovating or repairing pre-1978 homes. EPA-certified firms are trained and certified to work lead-safe. Find a list of certified contractors on the EPA website.

Families can contact the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program if they would like help in identifying sources in their home that may have lead at [healthyhomes@azdhs.gov](mailto:healthyhomes@azdhs.gov) or 602-364-3118.

# **Arizona Public School Drinking Water Lead Screening Program**

## **Talking Points to Support Calls from Media or the Public**

The talking points below are intended to support your school's messaging in response to the media or the public. They provide starter language to which your school may wish to add additional information.

### **Main Messages**

- Lead levels have been detected at our school above the screening level set by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.
- Based on the information we've received from state and county departments of health, we do not believe our students or staff are at risk for lead poisoning because of the lead levels found at our school. Drinking water is not a common source of lead poisoning in Arizona.
- As soon as we were notified of elevated levels of lead at our school, we began taking immediate steps to resolve the problem. This includes *select all that apply* [shutting off all affected drinking fountains, providing bottled water, posting "no drinking" signs at all drinking fountains and water faucets, using bottled water at our cafeteria for cooking, catering our food service from an alternate kitchen, working with School Facilities Board to repair our plumbing systems...].
- Steps were chosen based off where the water was sampled (sink vs. a drinking fountain) and the associated risks with that water source.

### **Additional Information**

- The levels of lead found in water at our school are considered to be "action levels." They inform us about what actions we need to take to protect our school community, but don't indicate a serious health threat to our students or staff.
- While we are not allowing anyone to drink or cook with the water from certain buildings at our school, the water is still safe for most other activities including handwashing, showering, and cleaning.
- We voluntarily participated in this screening project with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality because we are committed to the health and wellbeing of our school community.

### **Resources**

- Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) Public School Drinking Water Lead Screening Program Website: <http://www.azdeq.gov/LeadScreeningProg>
- Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program Website: [www.azhealth.gov/lead](http://www.azhealth.gov/lead)

# Childhood Lead Poisoning

 Children can get lead poisoning by breathing in or swallowing dust that contains lead.

Even at low levels, lead can cause irreversible damage to hearing, growth, and development.

For more information contact our Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 602-364-3118 azhealth.gov/lead

## Sources of Lead

### Home



Lead can be in paint in old homes built before 1978.

- Chipped paint
- Old furniture and toys
- Dirt
- Play or costume jewelry
- Pewter
- Crystal glassware

### Imported Goods



Items brought back from other countries may contain lead.

- Glazed pottery
- Asian, Hispanic, Indian spices
- Mexican candy (tamarindo and chili)



### Home Remedies

Some home remedies may contain lead. These remedies are typically red or orange powders.

- Traditional and folk remedies (Greta, Azarcón, Pay-loo-ah)

### Beauty Products



Imported beauty products from Asia, India, and Africa may contain lead.

- Sindoor, Khol, Kajal, Surma

## Cleaning



Wash hands



Keep shoes outside



Mop & wet wipe



Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter



Wash toys

Avoid:  
Sweeping  
Dry dusting  
Beating rugs

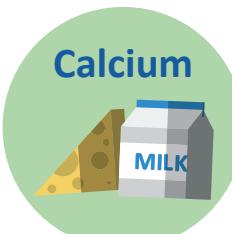
## Nutrition

These foods can help lower your child's lead level.



Vitamin C

Tomatoes  
Strawberries  
Oranges  
Potatoes



Calcium

Milk  
Cheese  
Yogurt



Iron

Chicken  
Steak  
Fish  
Peas  
Eggs

# Envenenamiento por Plomo en los Niños

 Los niños se pueden envenenar con plomo al respirar o tragar polvo que contenga plomo.

Incluso en niveles bajos, el plomo puede causar daños irreversibles a la audición, el crecimiento y el desarrollo de los niños

Para más información comuníquese al Programa de Prevención de Envenenamiento por Plomo en los Niños, en la Oficina de Salud Ambiental al 602-364-3118 [azhealth.gov/lead](http://azhealth.gov/lead)

## Procedencia del Plomo

### Hogar



El plomo puede estar en la pintura de casas antiguas construidas antes de 1978.

- Pintura descascarada
- Tierra
- Peltre
- Muebles y juguetes antiguos
- Joyería de fantasía o bisutería
- Cristal

### Objetos Importados



Los artículos traídos de otros países pueden contener plomo.

- Cerámica esmaltada
- Especias asiáticas, hispanas e indias
- Dulces mexicanos (con chile o tamarindo)



### Remedios Caseros

Algunos remedios caseros pueden contener plomo. Estos remedios regularmente son polvos de color rojo o naranja.

- Remedios tradicionales y populares (Greta, Azarcón y Pay-loo-ah)



### Productos de Belleza

Algunos productos de belleza importados de Asia, India, y África pueden contener plomo.

- Sindoor, Khol, Kajal, Surma

## Limpieza



Identifique y elimine el origen o fuente del plomo.

### Trabajos

Los trabajos como reparación de autos, minería, construcción y plomería pueden aumentar su exposición al plomo. Se puede traer polvo de plomo a casa en su piel, ropa, zapatos u otros artículos traídos del trabajo.

- Baterías de auto
- Trozos/piezas de metal
- Municiones



### Pasatiempos

Ciertos pasatiempos aumentan su riesgo de hacer contacto con plomo.

- Cacería (balas de plomo)
- Pesca (pesas de plomo)
- Pinturas de artistas
- Muebles renovados



### Viajes

El viajar fuera de los Estados Unidos puede aumentar el riesgo de hacer contacto con productos con base de plomo.

- Recuerdos
- Juguetes
- Especies o alimentos
- Joyería



Lávese las manos



Deje los zapatos afuera



Trapee y limpie con trapo húmedo



Use aspirador a con un filtro HEPA



Lave los juguetes

Evite:  
Barrer  
Sacudir tapetes  
Desempolvar en seco

Mantenga los restos y el polvo de plomo fuera de su hogar con estos consejos útiles.



Vitamina C

Tomates  
Fresas  
Naranjas  
Papas



Calcio

Leche  
Queso  
Yogur



Hierro

Pollo  
Bistec  
Pescado  
Chícharos  
Huevos

ADHS

## Nutrición

Estos alimentos pueden ayudar a disminuir los niveles de plomo en sus niños.