

Public School Drinking Water Lead Screening Program

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the health concerns from lead exposure?

Young children are most at risk 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.

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. Talk to your child's doctor to see if your child needs a blood lead test.

How can lead affect school drinking water?

School drinking water may become contaminated with lead even if the facility's water provider is in compliance with lead drinking water regulations. As water moves through a school's plumbing system, lead from **plumbing materials** and fixtures that contain lead, such as water fountains, faucets and water heaters, may leach lead into the water. Further, the risk of lead contamination in school drinking water is increased because of schools' intermittent water use associated with school facility operating schedules, e.g., schools often are closed on weekends and have several extended school breaks throughout the year.

How does lead get into my drinking water? What is leaching?

If lead or lead solder is present in the pipes that deliver the water into a school, home, or business, the lead can dissolve into the water and be carried to a faucet or drinking fountain (this is known as "leaching").

Lead levels are highest when the water has been sitting in lead pipes for several hours. Additionally, using hot water can draw lead out of pipes, solder or fixtures, which means it can leach higher levels of lead into the water.

Should I be concerned with lead in drinking water?

Drinking water is not considered to be 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.

Does boiling water remove lead?

No. Boiling water does not remove lead. Boiling water can actually concentrate lead levels so always use cold water for drinking and cooking, including for making baby formula or cereal.

Will my water filter remove lead?

Some faucet and pitcher filters can remove lead from tap water. If you use a filter, be sure to get one that is tested and certified by an independent third party to remove lead in accordance with the standards developed by the National Sanitation Foundation, also known as NSF International. Be sure to maintain and replace a filter device in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions to protect water quality. Remember, home treatment devices require periodic maintenance and replacement and can only treat the water that flows from the faucet(s) to which it is connected. Read the package to be sure the treatment device is approved to reduce lead or contact NSF International at 800-NSF-8010 or www.nsf.org for information on performance standards for home treatment devices.

What can you do to protect yourself and your family from lead exposure?

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 instead 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 or 602-364-3118.

What can parents and/or general public do to help reduce exposure to lead in tap water?

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 1–2 minutes.

Never use hot water from the faucet for drinking or cooking, especially when making baby formula or food for infants.

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.

The lead levels at my school are above 15 ppb (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. Children’s exposure to lead in drinking water at their school is only a small part of their overall potential exposure. While it is unlikely that lead in drinking water at schools would cause staff or children to have significantly elevated blood lead levels, it can contribute to overall exposure. Risk will vary depending on the individual and on other potential sources of exposure in the home (lead paint, imported spices, imported glazed pottery and home remedies).

If the lead levels are higher than 15 ppb, the school facility will take appropriate actions to determine the source of lead and remediate the situation.

Lead was found in my child’s school do I need to have my home tested?

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 laboratory on the ADHS webpage at <https://app.azdhs.gov/bfs/labs/elbis/drinkingwatertestinglabs/drinkingwatersearchcontentpage.aspx>

Do I need to test my child/children for lead exposure?

The only method to determine a child's lead level is for them to have a blood lead test done by a health provider.

Is it safe to shower and brush teeth?

Yes. Per the Center for Disease Control, bathing and showering should be safe for you and your children, even if the water contains lead over EPA's action level. Human skin does not absorb lead in water.

Who do I need to contact to find out more information about water quality in my area?

Your water provider is your best source for information about the quality of your water. Every community water supplier must provide an annual report, sometimes called a Consumer Confidence Report, or "CCR," to its customers. The report provides information about your local drinking water quality, including the water's source, contaminants found in the water and how consumers can get involved in protecting drinking water.

What is the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program?

For more than two decades, the Arizona Department of Health Services has maintained a Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. The program receives reports of blood lead levels in Arizona children and provides follow-up with healthcare providers and families for children identified with elevated blood lead levels.

When a child is identified with elevated blood lead levels, the program will coordinate with local health care providers and families to ensure that the child will receive follow-up testing. Efforts are made to identify the source of the lead poisoning through phone interviews and home investigations. Paint, soil, dust, and other samples in the homes are collected to pinpoint the source. Drinking water is not known to be a source of lead poisoning for affected children in Arizona. Common sources of lead poisoning in Arizona include lead paint, imported spices, imported glazed pottery and home remedies.