



## **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.