



Lead in School Drinking Water

Information and Resources for Schools

How does lead get into school drinking water?

Lead enters from a building's plumbing system. It may be present in various parts of the plumbing system (such as lead solder, brass fixtures, and lead or galvanized pipes) and leach into water standing in the system.

The amount of lead in drinking water depends on how corrosive the water is and the materials used to construct the plumbing system. The age of the building does not matter, even new plumbing fixtures can leach lead into drinking water. The longer water stands in the plumbing system, the more lead it can absorb. [Learn more about lead in drinking water, other common sources, and health effects of lead.](#)

How can schools test for lead in drinking water?

[Testing for lead in schools \(PDF\)](#) can be complex, especially the first time. It requires researching your school design, training staff to take samples correctly, and clear communication before and after sampling is completed. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed the [3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools: Revised Technical Guidance \(PDF\)](#), designed to help school officials test for lead.

The 3T's are:

- **Training** school officials about the sources and health effects of lead, identifying potential areas where elevated lead may occur, and developing a testing plan.
- **Testing** for lead and taking proper corrective action.
- **Telling** students, parents, staff and the community about the plan to test, the results, and any remediation actions.

If you want to test your school's water, we recommend you follow this guidance as you develop your testing plan.

Related resource:

[Testing for lead in school drinking water systems \(DOH331-261 PDF\)](#) a brochure with step-by-step instructions on collecting samples in a school building.

How can schools reduce lead levels in drinking water ?

Things schools can do to reduce lead in drinking water.

- Advise staff and students to run the water for a few seconds before drinking.
- Remove or replace fixtures that leach lead.
- Flush the piping system in the building.
- Provide bottled water.
- Repair the plumbing system.
- Use only the cold-water tap for drinking, preparing juice or cooking.
- Install water treatment devices.
- Develop a new source of drinking water.

Rules and Regulations

The Washington State Department of Health's Office of Drinking Water oversees state and federal drinking water rules. Schools that own or operate their own water system must comply with the requirements of the [federal Lead and Copper Rule](#). We require these systems to sample for lead to minimize the risk of exposure from drinking water.

Most schools get their water from public water systems and are not required to meet the requirements of the Lead and Copper Rule. The 1988 federal [Lead Contamination Control Act \(LCCA\)](#), was intended to reduce lead exposure, and any health risks, in drinking water at schools and child care centers. The main focus of the LCCA was to remove drinking water coolers with lead-lined tanks. Although the LCCA did have monitoring and reporting requirements for schools, it was challenged in court and cannot be enforced.

The State Board of Health has adopted revisions to [WAC 246-366, Primary and Secondary Schools](#) that includes a section requiring lead testing. However, the new provisions of WAC 246-366 (titled WAC 246-366A) can't be implemented until funding is included in the legislative budget. Until funding is available, the previous version of the rule remains in effect and does NOT include lead testing.