# Voluntary Free Testing for Lead in Drinking Water

## at Public Schools and Childcare Facilities

### Who is eligible?

Most public schools or childcare facilities are eligible. Testing for lead is recommended, but not required, in schools and childcare facilities that are not regulated as public water systems.

### Why is testing important?

Exposure to lead is most dangerous for young children (six and under) and infants because their bodies are growing quickly. A dose of lead that would have little effect on an adult could have a big effect on a small body. Visit the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare's lead information website for more information.

### How can lead get into drinking water?

Lead is not usually found in water from a well, spring, or surface water source. Lead normally enters drinking water from a building's plumbing system. Check out EPA's Sources of Lead in Drinking Water for more information.

### How to test?

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has voluntary testing available through the Idaho Bureau of Laboratories (IBL). To request tests, fill out a form here. The US Environmental Protection Agency's 3Ts program has a lead sampling video to show you how to use the tests. Testing reports will be sent to you and made available on DEQ's website.

# Follow-up

**Establish a plan:** No level of lead is safe for children. Facilities should determine how to respond to the sample results. DEQ has money available to help with remediation.

**Follow-up tests:** If sample results indicate high levels of lead, follow-up tests are highly recommended. These tests can be requested through IBL.

# Reducing Lead Levels

**Control measures:**

- Clean faucet aerators regularly.
- Use cold water for food and beverage preparation as hot water will dissolve lead more quickly.
- Instruct children and staff to run water briefly (30 seconds) before drinking.
- Run (for approximately 1 minute) all indoor faucets and water fountains before anyone arrives each morning to remove stagnant water.
- If initial sample results from a tap or fountain exceed 15 parts per billion (ppb), consider providing bottled water and/or shutting off problem taps and/or fountains.

**Permanent remedies:** If initial and follow-up sample results from a tap or fountain exceed 15 parts per billion (ppb), examine permanent options for lead reduction:

- Replace fixtures with new "lead-free" products.
- Add point-of-use filtration devices certified to remove lead.
- Check for grounding wires attached to water pipes. An electrical current may accelerate the corrosion of lead in piping materials.
- Replace lead pipes, if present.
- Reconfigure building plumbing to bypass sources of lead contamination.
- Add automatic flushing valves to reduce water stagnation.
- Inform the public about lead.

**Informing the public:** In addition to testing for lead and fixing problems, a lead control program should include a public information component. If any lead exposures are identified, inform all parents, teachers, students, and employees of the steps taken to correct any problems. Choose the best methods to communicate the results, which may include a press release, letters or fliers, mailbox or paycheck stuffers, newsletters, meetings/presentations, website posting, or email. DEQ can assist with messaging.

## Resources

EPA's 3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water
DEQ's Lead Testing Webpage
IBL Testing Request
DEQ's Contaminants in Drinking Water Webpage

## Contact

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