



Kaleida Health

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Recommendation to health care providers in response to reports of lead in schools' drinking water:

- In this region, lead paint chips and lead in household dust have historically been implicated as the major contributors to childhood lead exposure.
- The water testing reports from area schools identify specific sinks, faucets, and drinking fountains that supply water with a lead concentration that exceeds the EPA's action level of 15 parts per billion. When public water systems exceed EPA's action level, they need to respond by improving corrosion control, replacing plumbing components, and educating the public. However, no amount of lead exposure is considered safe for children and pregnant women, and the goal is always zero exposure to lead.
- Despite what we know about the lead in water concentrations at specific taps, the amount of exposure for each individual student is unknown. A student's exposure is influenced by how much and how often s/he drinks from the water sources in question and his/her body size. (The same dose of lead has a greater impact on someone of smaller size. Formula-fed infants exposed to lead in tap water are at the highest risk because they consume a large volume of formula relative to their body size.)
- A blood lead test is the only way to measure a child's exposure to lead.
- In general, infants, young children, and pregnant women are more susceptible to the harmful effects of lead. Parents should be aware of the test results in their individual schools and their child's potential exposure to lead in drinking water. Parents and health care providers can obtain a copy of the test results for their schools from their school district.
- Health care providers are encouraged to order a lead test for any child whose parent is concerned about their potential exposure to lead in water. A blood lead test can be conducted with a nurse-only visit for a point of care test, or providers can produce an e-script for a clinical lab blood lead test without requiring a visit to the physician's office.
- Providers may want to talk with parents about the child's overall risk for lead exposure, considering lead in school and residential drinking water along with other sources, such as chipping/peeling paint, home renovations, pica, take-home occupational exposure, foreign travel, and use of imported products (e.g., traditional medicine, cosmetics, spices, pottery).
- Parents and providers are encouraged to take note of local school districts' plans for providing free, safe drinking water to school occupants in response to the test results.
- More information:
 - Information for Health Professionals Across the United States on Lead in Drinking Water, from the Network of Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units:
http://www.pehsu.net/_Lead_and_Drinking_Water_.html
 - Parent guide to lead in school drinking water:
http://www.healthyschools.org/documents/Parent_Guide_to_Lead_in_School_Drinking_Water.pdf
 - Effects of lead and lead poisoning prevention:
<http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/>