



LEAD LEVELS IN DRINKING WATER

The U.S. EPA has identified 15 parts per billion (ppb) as the action level for lead in drinking water. Pregnant women and children should not consume water that has tested above 15 ppb. Recognizing that protecting children from exposure to lead is important to lifelong good health, the Ohio Department of Health is offering the following guidance regarding confirmed lead levels in drinking water above and below the federal action level in homes and schools to prevent or minimize lead exposure.

RESIDENTIAL PARAMETERS FOR DRINKING WATER

Testing Level in Parts per Billion	
>15	Pregnant women and children should not drink the water
NON DETECT to ≤15	Minimize exposure: Filter appropriately, flush, use cold water
NON DETECT	No action

SCHOOL PARAMETERS FOR DRINKING WATER

Testing Level in Parts per Billion	
>15	Pregnant women and children should not drink the water Remove fixture or source (e.g., fountain, faucet)
NON DETECT to ≤15	Minimize exposure: Filter appropriately, flush, use cold water, remove fixture or source
NON DETECT	No action

To minimize lead exposure in residential and school settings, homeowners and school personnel are encouraged to explore and address all possible sources of lead, including:

- Lead pipes in plumbing: Dull gray in color and will appear shiny when scratched. Banned since 1986 and not widely used since the 1930s.
- Copper pipes joined by lead solder: Solder will be dull gray in color and will appear shiny when scratched. Banned since 1986 and many communities banned prior to 1986.
- Brass pipes, faucets, fittings and valves: May contain alloys of lead.
- Sediments in screens on faucets: Debris from plumbing can collect on screens and may contain lead.
- Water service line to residences and schools made of lead: Pipes that carry water from the municipal water system main to residences and schools may contain lead.
- Water fountains in schools may contain lead parts: Specific brands of water fountains contain lead parts or have lead lined water tanks. Since 1988, it has been mandated that water fountains be lead free but older schools may have outdated models.

Resources:

- Information (attached) adapted from “Drinking Water Best Management Practices For Schools and Child Care Facilities Served by Municipal Water Systems” (U.S. EPA)

Mary DiOrio, MD
Medical Director, Ohio Department of Health

Rick Hodges, MPA
Director, Ohio Department of Health