

Sampling for Lead in Drinking Water

Q. What is the drinking water quality standard for lead?

A. The Ontario drinking water quality standard for lead is 10 micrograms or 0.01 milligrams per litre. This standard is based on a national guideline set by Health Canada.

Q. How is water sampled for lead and how often does this sampling take place?

A. The Board follows O.Reg 243/07 for lead sampling in schools. We are currently entering our final year of a three year lead sampling program to ensure that all of our drinking water fixtures and food prep sinks have been sampled. Following the end of this program, we will return to sampling one drinking water fixture annually at each school.

To sample for lead, two one-litre samples are taken. These samples include:

- 1) **Standing sample** - collected after water has been sitting in the pipes overnight.
- 2) **Flushed sample** - collected after the drinking water fixture has been flushed for at least five minutes and turned off and left unused for at least 30 minutes but not more than 35 minutes.

Q. What happens when there is an exceedance for lead?

A. Exceedances for lead are reported Public Health and the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks. If the exceedance is on a standing sample, the school is moved to daily flushing of all drinking water fixtures. If the exceedance is on a flushed sample we immediately remove that fixture from service and begin actions to address the issue. Each situation is unique and involves investigation, remediation and verification through two sets of resamples. Once the acceptable results are achieved, the fixture is returned to service. This is done with guidance from Public Health. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservations and Parks will follow up with the Board and local Medical Officer of Health if necessary.

Q. How does lead get into the drinking water?

A. Lead pipe service connections have been used to deliver water from distribution pipes since the late 1800s. Older buildings, generally those built before the mid-1950s are more likely to have lead components. Extended contact between standing water and the components can cause the lead to be released from the pipes.

Q. Why flush the drinking water fixtures?

A. Flushing has been shown to reduce lead levels in drinking water fixtures. By flushing fixtures, water that may have come into contact with lead over an extended period of time is replaced with fresh water.

Q. Am I able to view reports from the lead sampling?

A. Yes, if you are interested in viewing the reports for your school, please speak with the principal. If you would like more information on reading the reports, a guideline is available. Please contact Rebecca Wood, Occupational Health and Safety Specialist at 905-527-5092 ext. 2689, for a copy.

Q. Where can I go for further information?

A. You can always direct your questions to the school's principal. If you are interested in further web resources on lead please visit: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/flushing-and-sampling-lead>