

Lead Testing in K-12 Schools and Daycares FAQs

This FAQ was created to help parents and caregivers understand potential lead exposure risks following drinking water testing in schools and daycares.

Q. How can lead in the drinking water at my child's school or daycare affect my child?

- A. Lead in drinking water can cause learning, behavior, and other health problems, especially in young children. Young children, under the age of 6, are more susceptible to the negative effects of lead exposure due to their developing brains and their higher rate of absorption of ingested lead. No safe level of lead in drinking water has been identified.

Q. My school or daycare has been found to have high levels of lead in some of the water fixtures used for cooking or drinking. How can I know how much lead my child has absorbed?

- A. The amount of lead your child has been exposed to at school or daycare depends on how much water your child drinks from the identified fixture(s), how long your child has been drinking it, and the child's age and other personal factors. The only way to tell for sure is to get your child tested. A blood lead test is a simple way to determine your child's blood lead level.

Q. How do I get my child tested for lead?

- A. Talk to your child's healthcare provider about blood lead testing. Note the amount of time your child spends at school or daycare and how much water your child typically drinks from sources at the facility. A good time to do this would be at your child's next well-child check or physical, but you can follow up sooner if you're concerned about your child's lead exposure.

Q. Where does lead in drinking water in a school or day care come from?

- A. Lead in drinking water may come from many places in the water system: the service line connecting the building to the public water supply; lead in brass fixtures or fittings; lead solder joining copper pipes; and plumbing fixtures such as faucets. Lead levels in water tend to be highest after it has been sitting in the pipes overnight or for extended periods, such as during weekends and holidays. Hot water also tends to contain more lead, so cold water should always be used for drinking and cooking.

Q. What other sources of lead may my child be exposed to?

- A. One of the most common sources of lead exposure in children is lead-based paint in older homes, those built before 1978 when all lead-based paint was banned for residential use, and especially those built before the 1950s when lead-based paint was still widely used. To learn more about potential sources of lead, visit <https://doh.sd.gov/topics/diseases/infectious-diseases/childhood-lead-poisoning-prevention-program/sources-of-lead/>

Q. What can I do to reduce my child's exposure to lead?

- A. If your school or daycare has identified lead in their drinking water, they will be working with the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) to lower the levels of lead. For ideas and resources about what you can do to reduce lead exposure at home, visit the South Dakota Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program page (<https://doh.sd.gov/topics/diseases/infectious-diseases/childhood-lead-poisoning-prevention-program/>).