

**1. What is lead and how are people exposed to it?**

- Lead is a naturally occurring element. Lead has many industrial uses and has been found in water systems since the late 1800s. It is also present in soil, food and indoor dust. Over the past few decades, exposure to lead had significantly decreased due to restrictions in the use of gasoline, paint and solder.

**2. How does lead get into drinking water?**

- Ontario's surface and groundwater generally does not contain lead. If lead does occur naturally, the concentrations are typically extremely low and below the drinking water quality standard for lead. Where there are concentrations of lead in drinking water above the standard, the likely cause is from the lead pipes servicing the facility or nearby area, or lead solder used in the plumbing of fixtures.

**3. What is the drinking water standard for lead?**

- The Ontario drinking water quality standard for lead is 10 micrograms per litre (10 parts per billion).
- In March 2019, Health Canada recommended 5 parts per billion as the maximum acceptable limit for lead concentration in drinking water, however, the provincial standard in Ontario (which governs schools in Ontario) remains at 10 parts per billion.

**4. Should I be concerned about lead in the water at my child's school?**

- The drinking water at schools in the DPCDSB follows stringent water testing in accordance with Ontario Regulation 243/07 and under the direction of the Ministry of the Environment. All sampling, testing and any remediation is undertaken based on these directions and in conjunction with local public health units.

**5. How is the school community informed of lead in water testing results?**

- We have posted information on the DPCDSB website (<https://www.dpcdsb.org/about-us/planning-operations>).
- Parents/guardians and staff are notified directly by the school if the drinking water lead concentration is deemed to be unacceptable for consumption, with each fixture shut down, signage posted accordingly and an alternative water supply provided.

**6. What are the requirements for schools for testing lead in water?**

- The Government of Ontario publishes guidelines for schools and child care centres to flush plumbing and test water for lead.
- Each fixture, where water is assumed to be taken for consumption, is tested twice:
  1. A standing sample: taken after the water has not been in use at that fixture for 6 hours
  2. A flushed sample: taken after the water has been run for 5 minutes. Flushed samples are representative of water quality during a school day.

- 7. What is the procedure if test results indicate a high concentration of lead is present?**
- If a drinking water test result indicates that the provincial standard for lead concentration of 10 parts per billion has been exceeded, the local Medical Officer of Health is notified, and will review and/or assign corrective action(s).
  - These corrective actions may involve taking the fixture out of service, increasing flushing, replacing the fixture or plumbing lines, or permanently rendering the fixture unusable. If necessary, while this work takes place, the school will make alternate arrangements to ensure staff and students have access to another water source.
  - Standing water sample exceedances can typically be resolved by implementing a daily flushing schedule for the school.
- 8. Why did some schools in Dufferin-Peel show a high concentration of lead in the water?**
- In some instances, higher lead in water test results can come from taps and fixtures not being used much.
  - As well, a lot of testing occurs during the summer months when there are limited students and staff in our buildings, or when there are major construction projects underway with water being shut off for extended periods, resulting in long standing time and higher concentration levels.
- 9. Who conducts the water testing?**
- Under Regulation 243/07, the Ministry of the Environment requires all sites to be tested annually between May 1 and October 31.
  - The DPCDSB uses an independent, certified third-party contractor to gather all water samples and send them to a certified laboratory to perform the analysis.
  - Under the Regulation, if an exceedance is detected at one of our schools, the lab is required to inform the Ministry of the Environment, the local public health unit, the Ministry of Education and the DPCDSB.
- 10. When are tests conducted?**
- Testing is conducted between May and October on an annual basis.
  - After all drinking water fixtures have been sampled at least once, we will test at least one tap or fountain from each school—on a rotational basis—once annually. In some cases, schools will be tested every three years where requirements for reduced sampling have been met.