



# Testing Your School for Lead in Drinking Water: Post-Sampling Guidance

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## Receiving Sample Result Reports

The laboratory will generally report your sample results within two to three weeks after you have returned the sample bottles. The laboratory report will provide a single result for each sample. The results will be displayed in one of two units of measure:

- Milligrams per liter (mg/L) - mg/L can also be displayed as “parts per million” or “ppm.”
- Micrograms per liter (ug/L) - ug/L can also be displayed as “parts per billion” or “ppb.”

## How do I know if there are areas of concern?

The US Environmental Protection Agency has established a health action level of 20 ug/L (0.020 mg/L) for 250 mL samples. Public water systems use 1000 mL samples and have to meet an action level of 15 ug/L (0.015 mg/L). The 15 ug/L action level is used to direct public water systems to evaluate water system changes affecting the entire water system and is not a health based standard for a specific location. Schools receiving water from a water utility should use the 20 ug/L health action level when determining which water outlets need to be addressed.

## What should I do?

### Shut Off Problem Outlets

Immediately shut off or disconnect any outlet (e.g. faucet or water fountain) with sample results exceeding 20 ug/L. Place a placard on the outlet indicating that it has been shut off, due to high lead and will remain out of service until the problem has been corrected.

### Conduct Outreach to Staff and Parents

Provide staff, students, and parents with a letter to inform them of the lab results and describe your plans to address the problem. Sample letters can be found at [www.medwp.com](http://www.medwp.com) - click on “Lead in Drinking Water”.

### Conduct Follow-up Sampling

All outlets, where the sample results exceeded 20 ug/L, should be resampled to determine if the elevated lead levels are caused by lead components in the outlet or lead/lead solder in the piping conveying the water to the outlet. This should include a “first-draw” sample, as previously done, and a follow-up “flush” sample. Follow-up flush samples involve the collection of water from an outlet where the water has run for approximately 30 seconds before the sample is collected.

## When Sample Results are Greater than 100 ug/L

If any sample results are greater than 100 ug/L, contact the Maine CDC Environmental and Occupational Health Program at 866-292-3474 to speak with one of the State Toxicologists regarding exposure risk to students and staff.

## Permanent Measures

You should identify ways to permanently reduce or eliminate the source(s) of lead in your building's plumbing. Possible measures include:

- Removing or replacing problem outlets or components. Use only lead-free materials to repair or replace the facility's plumbing system;
- Hire an electrician to look for improperly grounded electrical circuits that may accelerate corrosion;
- Cleaning aerators in accordance with a regular maintenance schedule (aerators can trap particles of lead that dislodge from solder or other lead components).

If you have any questions about ways to reduce the risk of lead in drinking water, contact the Drinking Water Program at 207-287-2070.

## Other Steps to Reduce the Risk of Lead Exposure in Drinking Water

Never use hot water for drinking or cooking. Lead leaches more easily into hot water than into cold water. The water may also sit for long periods of time in contact with lead components in a hot water tank. Consider conducting educational outreach to food preparation staff and appropriate teachers.

Since contact time may increase the concentration of lead in water, flushing of the most critical drinking water fixtures is recommended. Water should be flushed after weekends, holidays and vacations. A good rule of thumb for flushing fixtures is to flush for 30 seconds to one minute or until it runs cold (longer for refrigerated water fountains).

Because lead leaching can be a dynamic process, a regular routine sampling program of the most critical drinking water fixtures is recommended every 3-5 years. In addition, work on the plumbing or drinking water fixtures may effect lead concentrations. Lead sampling is recommended after removing or replacing piping or drinking water fixtures.

## Questions

If you have any questions regarding lead in drinking water, please contact the Drinking Water Program at 207-287-2070.

***FMI:** More information about lead in drinking water in schools can be found at [www.medwp.com](http://www.medwp.com) - click on "Lead in Drinking Water."*

