

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT LEAD IN YOUR DRINKING WATER

Gurney Elementary School found elevated levels of lead in drinking water. Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Please read this information closely to see what you can do to reduce lead in your drinking water.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEAD

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults. Lead is stored in the bones, and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the child receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development.

SOURCES OF LEAD

Lead is a common, natural, toxic, and often useful metal that was used for years in products found around the home. It can be found throughout the environment in lead-based paint, air, soil, household dust, food, and certain types of pottery,

porcelain, and pewter. It can also be found in water.

Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminants in that it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like rivers and lakes. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of corrosion, or wearing away, of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and household plumbing. These materials include lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, brass and chrome plated brass faucets, and, in some cases, pipes made of lead that connect your house to the water main (service lines). Some common causes of corrosion are dissolved oxygen, acidity (low pH), and low mineral content in the water. In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing more than 0.2% lead and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes, and other plumbing materials to not more than 8.0%.

When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems containing lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means the first draw from the faucet in the

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morning, or later in the afternoon after returning from work or school, can contain fairly high levels of lead.

Lead in drinking water, although rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning, can significantly increase a person's total lead exposure, particularly the exposure of infants who drink baby formulas and concentrated juices that are mixed with water.

Other important sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint, soil, and household dust. Homes build prior to 1978 may have lead-based paint both inside and outside of the house. Ingestion of lead-based paint chips is frequently a cause of lead exposure in young children. Soil and household dust may also contain deteriorating lead-based paint.

STEPS THE CONSUMER CAN TAKE TO REDUCE THEIR EXPOSURE TO LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

To reduce your exposure to lead in drinking water, the following precautions should be considered and taken.

Let the water run from the faucet before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. The longer water resides in your home or

building's plumbing, the more lead it may contain. Flushing the faucet means running the cold water faucet until the water gets noticeably colder, usually about 30 seconds to 2 minutes. If your house or building has a lead service line to the water main, you may have to flush the water for a longer time. Although toilet flushing or showering flushes water through a portion of your home or building's plumbing system, you still need to flush water in each faucet before using it for drinking or cooking. Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to reduce lead exposure. To conserve water, fill a couple of bottles for drinking water after flushing the faucet, and wherever possible use the first flush to wash dishes or water the plants.

Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water faucet. Hot water can dissolve more lead in less time than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold tap and heat it on the stove or microwave. Do not prepare baby formula with water from the hot water tap.

Do not boil water to remove lead. Boiling water will not reduce lead levels.

Periodically remove the strainers from faucets and flush by running water for 3 to 5 minutes to remove any loose lead solder

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or debris that has accumulated over time.

Parents may want to have your child's blood tested for lead by your family doctor or pediatrician and they can provide you information about the health effects of lead.

Despite our best efforts to control water corrosivity and remove lead from the water supply, lead levels in some homes or buildings can be high. To find out whether you need to take action in your home, have your drinking water tested to determine if it contains excessive concentrations of lead. Testing is essential because you cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. The following is a list of some Ohio EPA approved laboratories in your area that you can call to have your water tested for lead.

Biosolutions – (440) 708-2999
Geauga County – (440) 279-1975

The steps described above will reduce the lead concentrations in your drinking water. However, if a water test indicates that the drinking water coming from your faucet contains lead concentrations in excess of 15 micrograms per liter after flushing, or after we have completed our actions to minimize levels, then you may

want to take any of the following additional measures.

Purchase or lease a home treatment device. Home treatment devices are limited in that each unit treats only water that flows from the faucet(s) to which it is connected, and all of the devices require periodic maintenance and replacement. Counter top devices such as reverse osmosis systems installed on the faucet or distillers can effectively remove lead from your drinking water. Some activated carbon filters may reduce lead levels at the faucet; however, all lead reduction claims should be investigated. Be sure to check the actual performance of a specific home treatment device before and after installing the unit.

Purchase bottled water for drinking and cooking. The Centers for Disease Control recommends children and pregnant women use bottled water or water from a filtration system that has been certified by an independent testing organization to reduce or eliminate lead for cooking, drinking and baby formula preparation.

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC WATER SYSTEM DOING TO REDUCE THE LEAD LEVELS IN HOMES AND BUILDINGS IN THIS AREA

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Readjusted treatment for
corrosion control.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information call us at
440-247-5500 or visit our Web
site at www.chagrinschools.org/
For more information on
reducing lead exposure around
your home or building and the
health effects of lead, visit EPA's
Web site at
<http://www.epa.gov/lead> or
contact your health care
provider.