



Quality H2O FAQ

Lead Testing – Pittsburgh Public Schools

Overview:

At the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS), our number one priority is the health and safety of our students and staff. As such, the District proactively moved to conduct the second round of voluntary lead testing of all District schools and facilities over the past nine months. The testing was completed on all drinking water and cooking use fixtures, including classrooms, offices, nurse's offices and other sink faucets in every school building and facility for lead.

In 2016, Pittsburgh Public Schools was one of the first districts in the region to test all drinking water and cooking use fixtures. At that time, the District also provided new filtered high efficiency water coolers with bottle filling stations at all schools, during the summer recess in 2016.

Through this most recent effort this summer (2019), the District tested 2,314 water fixtures across all schools and collected 4,676 samples using the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools and Child Care Facilities recommended sampling methodology. Of the 4,676 samples taken, 2.4% showed levels of lead above 15 parts per billion (ppb), which is the action level established by PA School Code Act 39 Section 742 amended in 2018. The action level used in 2016 was 20 ppb.

All fixtures where lead exceeding 15 ppb was found were immediately shut off and signage to prohibit usage was posted. Immediate action was taken by the District to repair or replace these fixtures. Detailed findings are available online at www.pghschools.org/qualityH2O.

1. What is lead?

Lead is a soft malleable and heavy metal. Lead is naturally occurring and can be found in air, soil, water, and even inside our homes. If ingested or inhaled, lead and its compounds can be harmful to animals and humans.

2. Where can I learn more about the effects of lead?

Additional information on the effects of lead are available at the following websites:

- Allegheny County Health Department: <http://www.achd.net/lead/drinking-water.html>;
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water>.
- Center for Disease Control (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/>

You can also contact the **EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.**

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3. How does lead get into drinking water?

The deterioration of older plumbing fixtures and pipes that contact lead can cause lead to enter drinking water. Lead in a water sample can originate from the water fixture (fountain, sink, etc.), plumbing upstream of the outlet fixture (pipe, joints, valves, fittings etc.), or it can already be in the water that is entering the facility. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes and fixtures.

4. How was each water fixture tested at my child's school?

The District followed the EPA's two-step sample process and took two samples from each water fixture in each school and District facility. The two-step process consists of a first-draw sample being taken from the first water to come out of a fixture that has not been used for 8 to 18 hours – after sitting overnight unused. The second sample is what is referred to as a flushed sample and is taken after letting water run from the fixture for 30 seconds. The concentrations of lead in first-draw samples are usually higher than in flushed samples.

5. If a water fixture reveals elevated levels of lead, what will the District do?

Any fixture where lead exceeding 15 ppb was found are immediately shut off and signage to prohibit usage is posted. Immediate action will be taken by the District to repair or replace these fixtures. If students or staff are currently onsite at the location identified, and when drinking fountains are impacted, bottled water will be distributed to the facility.

6. How can children come into contact with lead?

The most common source of lead is found in lead-based paint. Lead-based paint is often found in homes that were painted or built before 1978. In these homes, old paint can peel, chip, or weather to produce dust that contains lead. Also, if homes have plumbing that is made of lead or contains lead, there is a risk of lead seeping into the water. If you are worried about lead in your home, you can have your home and water tested. www.achd.net/safehomes/pubs/pdf/epa_lead_in_your_home.pdf

7. What are the effects of lead in children?

According to the EPA's website, low levels of exposure have been linked to behavior and learning problems, lower IQ and hyperactivity, slowed growth, hearing problems and anemia.

8. How do I know if my child has been affected by lead?

Lead exposure often has no obvious symptoms and frequently goes unrecognized. A health care provider can use a blood test to measure the level of lead in a child's blood.

9. What should I do if I suspect my child has lead poisoning?

If you are concerned that your child has been exposed to lead, please contact your child's physician. A physician usually orders a blood test to detect lead poisoning.



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Lead levels in the blood are measured in micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL). A level of 5 mcg/dL or higher indicates your child may have unsafe levels of lead in their blood and should have their blood tested periodically.

10. Is it safe to use the water at my child's school?

Yes. Any fixture (water fountain, sink) found to be above the EPA guideline of 15 ppb was immediately taken out of service and either repaired or replaced. Since lead is not absorbed through the skin, washing hands, swimming and showering and are safe.

11. I would like to get my child tested for lead but do not have health insurance. What should I do?

If you do not have health insurance for your child, please contact a Community Health Center. A list of Community Health Centers in Pittsburgh is listed below.

Community Health Centers in Pittsburgh

Organization	Site Name	Address	Phone	Web Site
East Liberty Family Health Center	East Liberty Office	6023 Harvard Street Pittsburgh, PA 15206	412-661-2808	East Liberty Health Center
East Liberty Family Health Center	Hosanna House Dental	807 Wallace Street Wilksburg, PA 15221	412-345-7730	East Liberty Health Center
East Liberty Family Health Center	Lincoln-Lemington Office	7171 Churchland Street Pittsburgh, PA 15206	412-361-8284	East Liberty Health Center
Metro Family Practice, Inc	Metro Community Health Center	1789 South Braddock Ave. Suite 410 Pittsburgh, PA 15218	412-247-2310	Metro Family Practice
North Side Christian Health Center	North Side Christian Health Center	816 Middle Street Pittsburgh, PA 15212	412-321-4001	North Side Christian Health Center
North Side Christian Health Center	Northview Heights Health Center	525 Pleasant Road Pittsburgh, 15214	412-322-7500	North Side Christian Health Center
Primary Care Health Services	Alma Illery Medical Center	7227 Hamilton Ave Pittsburgh, PA 15208	412-244-4700	Primary Care Health Services



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Primary Care Health Services	East End Family Health Center	117 North Negley Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15206	412-404-4000	Primary Care Health Services
Primary Care Health Services	Hazelwood Family Health Center	4918 Second Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15207	412-422-9520	Primary Care Health Services
Primary Care Health Services	Hill House Health Center	1835 Centre Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15219	412-261-0937	Primary Care Health Services
Primary Care Health Services	Manchester Health Center	441 South Main Street Pittsburgh, PA 15220	412-922-5636	Primary Care Health Services
Primary Care Health Services	McKeesport Family Health Center	627 Lysle Boulevard McKeesport, PA 15132	412-664-4112	Primary Care Health Services
Primary Care Health Services	West End Dental Center	441 South Main Street Pittsburgh, PA 15220	412-231-6700	Primary Care Health Services
Primary Care Health Services	West End Health Center	415 Neptune Street Pittsburgh, PA 15220	412-921-7200	Primary Care Health Services
Primary Care Health Services	Wilkinsburg Family Health Center	807 Wallace Ave Pittsburgh, PA 15221	412-247-5216	Primary Care Health Services
Squirrel Hill Health Center	Squirrel Hill Health Center	4516 Browns Hill Rd Pittsburgh, PA 15217	412-422-7442	Squirrel Hill Health Center
Squirrel Hill Health Center	Squirrel Hill Health Center	103 Towne Square Way Brentwood, PA 15227	412-422-7442	Squirrel Hill Health Center
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center	Matilda H. Thiess Health Center	373 Burrows Street Pittsburgh, PA 15213	412-383-1550	Matilda Thiess Health Center