

FAQ for school divisions and public schools

What is lead?

Lead is a soft, heavy metal present in our environment. In the past, lead was used in the manufacturing of many products. Lead exposure has greatly reduced over the last 40 years due to the removal of lead in paint, gasoline, plumbing products, and more.

What are the possible health impacts of lead on children?

Low level lead exposure has been associated with effects on intellectual development and behavior of children. However, exposure to lead poses a risk to everyone's health. Other health effects, such as effects on blood pressure, have also been associated with relatively low levels of exposure.

How does lead get into drinking water?

Lead is not natural to Manitoba waters. It is introduced to drinking water through corrosion of lead piping, solder, fixtures, and service lines within older homes and buildings. For this reason, effective monitoring of lead levels requires collection from drinking water taps.

Why are schools and child care centres having their water tested?

In 2019, Health Canada updated the national guideline for lead in drinking water following new studies indicating health impacts occur at lower levels of lead exposure than previously identified. The new guideline lowered the acceptable maximum concentration of lead in drinking water (from 0.01mg/L to 0.005mg/L), and recommended testing drinking water at school taps and drinking water fountains. Manitoba adopting this guideline in 2020.

Infants and young children are most sensitive to lead exposure due to their developing brains. Low levels of lead exposure has been associated with effects on intellectual development and behavior. To protect students, all schools and child care centres

If test results show lead levels in drinking water are above the national guideline, what action can schools and child care centres take?

Public health officials recommend that schools take corrective action (e.g., remove handles, or otherwise prevent taps from being used for drinking water and provide an alternative source of drinking water) to prevent exposure to increased lead in drinking

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