

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS LEAD IN DRINKING WATER OF SCHOOLS AND CHILD CARE CENTRES**

### **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 collecting test samples 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 adopted 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 should be testing all their drinking water taps to determine if their lead levels are below the guidelines, and if they are not, taking measures to address the problem as soon as possible.

## **How do schools and child care centres know if there is lead in their drinking water?**

You cannot see, taste, or smell lead in water. Testing at the tap is the only way to find out if there is lead in the drinking water.

The Province is supporting schools and child care centres testing and mitigation efforts through funding established under the Lead in Drinking Water Grant. The grant covers the costs of testing for lead in drinking water, and any mitigation actions, if needed. For more information on the grant program, visit: [Lead in Drinking Water Grant - Manitoba Environmental Industries Association \(meia.mb.ca\)](https://meia.mb.ca)

To effectively test lead in their drinking water, schools and child care centres are encouraged to develop and maintain a plumbing profile (inventory of pipes and fixtures), and a sampling plan to ensure all fixtures and faucets used for drinking water or food preparation are tested. Materials are available on the Environment and Climate website to guide schools and child care centres through this process - [Environment and Climate | Province of Manitoba \(gov.mb.ca\)](https://www.gov.mb.ca).

## **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 and child care centres take corrective actions (e.g., remove handles, or otherwise prevent taps from being used for drinking water, and provide an alternative source of drinking water) to prevent children's exposure to increased lead in drinking water as soon as possible. Such interim measures should be used to prevent exposure until mitigation work is complete and proven successful (i.e., re-test results are below the guideline).

Longer term solutions, or mitigation actions, that can be undertaken to reduce lead in drinking water, including replacing water fountains or taps, installing filtered bottle filling stations, reconfiguring the plumbing system, and/or replacing pipes and lead service lines. Schools and child care centres can request up-front support or reimbursement for these costs from the provincial Lead in Drinking Water Grant.

## **What other action has Manitoba taken to advance the adoption of Health Canada's revised lead guideline in communities?**

To help municipalities implement Health Canada's new, more stringent national guideline on lead in drinking water, the Province has established the Residential Lead

Monitoring Program. The Program, which focuses on testing and public communication, has been implemented by six Manitoban communities (Winnipeg, Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Dauphin, Morden and Thompson) and will be expanded to more communities this spring. Visit Environment and Climate's Lead in Drinking Water page for more information on actions being taken by municipalities:

<https://gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/lead/>

### **How do I know if the drinking water in my home has lead?**

Older homes and dwellings built before 1990 may have lead water fixtures, pipes and service connections. Newer homes (built after 1990) built in older areas may still have lead service lines (pipe delivering water from the main line to your home).

For information on testing your drinking water for lead and reducing your family's exposure:

[Lead in Drinking Water: Information for Manitoba Homeowners and Home-based Child Care Providers \(gov.mb.ca\)](#)

### **How do I get more information on lead in drinking water?**

If you have any questions, please consult or reach out to one of the resources below:

#### **For question related to Lead in Drinking Water Grant:**

Manitoba Environmental Industries Association  
204 783-7090

[drinkingwater@meia.mb.ca](mailto:drinkingwater@meia.mb.ca)

[meia.mb.ca/lead-in-drinking-water-grant/](http://meia.mb.ca/lead-in-drinking-water-grant/)

#### **For health-related concerns:**

Visit Manitoba Health's Be Aware of Lead website

at: [www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/lead/index.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/lead/index.html)

If you have any health concerns about lead exposures, you can:

- Contact your local public health office:  
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html>
- Call Health Links–Info Santé : 788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll-free)

**For questions on the status testing and mitigation:**

For information on testing, correction action and mitigation work conducted at your school, contact your school division or school:

Manitoba School Divisions and Districts

[https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/sb\\_contacts.html](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/sb_contacts.html)

Schools in Manitoba

[https://web.gov.mb.ca/school/school?action=top\\_page](https://web.gov.mb.ca/school/school?action=top_page)

**For other Inquiries:**

Office of Drinking Water

204-945-5762 OR [odw@gov.mb.ca](mailto:odw@gov.mb.ca)

[gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/](http://gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/)