



June 13, 2017

## **Lead Testing in Drinking Water at SD 73 Schools and District Facilities**

Last year, B.C.'s Ministry of Education directed all school districts to test their schools and facilities for lead in water. This is after elevated levels of lead were discovered in the drinking water systems of some B.C. schools.

School District No. 73 (Kamloops/Thompson) has completed initial testing of its schools and district facilities. The results show that in some local schools, levels of lead in the water are slightly above standards set by Health Canada.

Further testing has shown that running the water for one minute (flushing) reduces all lead levels to well within acceptable limits. As a result, SD 73 will implement a daily flushing program in all of its schools and facilities before they open for the day. The only exception is Pacific Way Elementary as it was built in 2001 and no elevated lead levels have been detected at that school.

Water fountains and taps that commonly provide drinking water will be flushed for one minute, starting immediately. Records will be kept by each school. Any taps (such as bathroom taps) which are not part of the flushing program will have signage posted nearby indicating that they are not to be used for drinking water.

The school district will continue with an annual testing protocol as per Ministry of Education requirements to ensure the water in schools and facilities is safe to drink. If you have specific questions about the testing at your child's school, please contact the school principal.

### **Frequently Asked Questions about Lead in Water**

#### **What is lead?**

Lead is a metal that is found naturally in the Earth's crust. Everyone is exposed to low levels of lead through food, tap water, air, dust, soil, and some consumer products. Lead was once used in products such as toys, paint, and plumbing materials, but the Government of Canada now restricts its use in many products.

#### **Why has lead been found in drinking water at some schools?**

The source of lead in the tap water tested is likely to be from building plumbing materials. Lead dissolves into water when the water sits stagnant for a long period of time in lead pipes, lead solder, and older brass or bronze taps and fixtures. Tap water properties, such as low pH and low alkalinity, can impact the potential for lead to dissolve into water. The combination of water chemistry, plumbing materials, and contact time determine the amount of lead in tap water.

#### **Why were local schools tested for lead levels?**

A policy came into effect September 26, 2016, requiring all schools to test for lead content in their drinking water and report the results annually to the Ministry of Education. The concern is that schools serve a population (young children) that is vulnerable to lead exposure, and water in the buildings may sit in pipes with lead components for extended periods of time.



**What is Interior Health's role?**

Interior Health is working with School District No. 73 (Kamloops/Thompson) to monitor lead levels at all school facilities to ensure that the tap water does not exceed the maximum allowable concentrations per Health Canada standards.

**How can I find out if I have high lead in my tap water at home?**

Lead is less likely to be present in buildings constructed after 1989, but the only way to know whether or not your tap water contains lead is to have it tested because you cannot see, taste, or smell lead in water. To test your water, contact an [accredited laboratory](#) to arrange for sample collection and processing. The lab will send you the necessary sample bottles and instructions.

**What can I do to reduce lead exposure in my home?**

Lead exposure in the home setting may vary. Families living in homes with plumbing containing lead should flush their taps each morning until a temperature drop in the water is observed, indicating the arrival of fresh water beyond the building. It is important to remember other sources of potential lead exposure for children that may be much more significant, such as lead paint.

Please see the Government of Canada website for further information about reducing overall lead exposure: <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/environnement-environnement/home-maison/lead-plomb-eng.php>

**For further information regarding water quality at SD 73 please contact:**

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