

Frequently Asked Questions: Testing for Lead in School Drinking Water

These frequently asked questions supplement the step-by-step instructions for schools that are found at healthvermont.gov/leadtest-schools.

You can click on a question to go to the answer. All answers follow below.

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Basics of the Law

1. Who is required to test?

All school districts, supervisory unions, independent schools, and licensed or registered child care providers in Vermont.

2. What are the requirements of the law?

The law requires schools and child care providers to test drinking and cooking water in their buildings for lead. If there is a test result at or above the action level of 4 ppb (parts per billion), schools and child care providers are to stop using that tap immediately, then develop and implement a remediation plan to lower the levels of lead to below 4 ppb.

Schools and child care providers are also required to notify parents, guardians and staff before testing begins and after any results are received.

Find [letter templates to use for notification](#).

Read the [Lead Rule](#) and [Act 66 \(2019\)](#) for more details on the requirements.

3. My school already tests for lead in drinking water on a regular basis. Do I need to do more testing?

Yes. Schools that are on a public drinking water system and test for lead under the Lead and Copper Rule administered by the Department of Environmental Conservation are still required to test all taps used for drinking and cooking, as determined by the school or child care, for lead under the requirements of this law.

4. When is a school required to test?

Schools began testing in September 2019. The [school testing schedule](#) shows each schools' sample collection window. Schools need to test for lead according to the schedule noted in the [Lead Rule](#):

- Group A – By June 30, 2024, every three years thereafter
- Group B – By December 31, 2024, every three years thereafter
- Group C – By June 30, 2025, every three years thereafter

5. What happens if we do not test?

Schools are required to by law to test their drinking and cooking water for lead. The testing status of all schools and child care providers will be available to the public on

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the State's [Results Website](#). The law states that schools and child care providers who do not comply may be fined up to \$500.00 following a hearing.

6. What is the action level, and what does it mean?

The action level set by the legislature is 4 ppb (parts per billion). If the level of lead in drinking water is at or above 4 ppb, then schools are required to fix the problem to lower lead levels below 4 ppb.

Any tap with a result at or above 4 ppb cannot be used for drinking, cooking or food prep until a fix has been implemented and follow-up testing shows the lead levels at the tap are below 4 ppb. Alternatively, the tap can be permanently removed or otherwise made inoperable.

Please note that there is no safe level of exposure to lead. The Health Department recommends that lead levels in water be as close to zero as possible. However, there is no remediation funding for fixing taps that are below 4 ppb.

7. Do we need to pay for anything?

Sample bottles, shipping and testing are free for schools.

Reimbursement is available to remediate any taps with levels at or above 4 ppb. School districts, supervisory unions and independent schools will be reimbursed for the actual cost of replacing a drinking water fixture, up to a maximum amount. Receipts or invoices will need to be submitted to the Health Department. The maximum amount for each type of fixture is:

- Public drinking fountains and ice machines: \$1,800.00
- Fixtures used for cooking: \$650.00
- All other fixtures in schools: \$350.00

Tap Inventory and Collecting Water Samples

1. Who is responsible for completing the tap inventory and collecting samples?

Schools are responsible for completing the tap inventory and collecting water samples. Each school should designate one or more sample collector(s) who should review the available guidance materials to make sure they are comfortable with how to collect water samples.

Find [guidance materials](#).

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2. There is a licensed child care program (preschool or afterschool) that operates in our school. Do we need to test those taps and send notification?

Schools will collect drinking water samples from all taps that are currently or reasonably expected to be used for drinking or cooking in the buildings they own, control and operate. To simplify the testing process, **the Health Department recommends that schools collect water samples for licensed child care programs (preschool or afterschool) that operate in their school.**

However, it is the responsibility of the child care to be sure the law's requirements for their facilities are met. This includes ensuring that taps within the child care area are tested, and that any taps found to have levels at or above 4 ppb are addressed.

The child care provider is also responsible for notifying their program's parents, guardians and staff at least 5 days before water sample collection begins, and within 10 business days of receiving results from the Lab.

School administrators (principals and facilities managers) should talk with child care providers to make sure they are fully aware of the school's plans and schedule for:

- collecting the water samples
- notifying parents, guardians, and staff after receiving results
- implementing any required remediation plans

Child care providers may also ask to review the school's tap inventory to ensure that taps in the child care areas are clearly identified in the location description.

3. How many samples need to be taken?

The number of samples depends on the number of taps that are used to provide water for drinking or cooking. Two samples at each tap, a first draw and a flush, need to be taken.

One exception is for combo fixtures, which are fixtures that have multiple taps (for example, a sink with a faucet and a drinking fountain, or bottle fill station and drinking fountain), will have two first draw samples, but only one flush sample. Another exception is for ice machines, which only require a first draw sample.

4. Which taps do we *not* need to collect samples from?

Schools do not need to collect samples from any tap that the school determines is **not** used for drinking or cooking purposes. These likely include bathroom sinks, science lab sinks, eye wash stations, emergency showers, tub fillers, outside spigots

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(unless used to fill water coolers or water bottles), showerheads, soak tubs, toilets, furnace drain valves, fire sprinklers and janitorial slop sinks.

5. What does a “first draw” sample mean? What does a “flush” sample mean?

First draw sample – collects the first water that comes out of the tap after a period of inactivity (between 8 and 18 hours). The first draw sample tests the water that is in the fixture. The first drop of water out of the fixture must end up in the sample bottle.

Flush sample – collects water after the tap has been running for 30 seconds. The flush sample tests the water that is in the pipes.

6. What is the difference between a tap and a fixture?

A tap is where the water comes out and from where you collect a water sample.

A fixture is the actual plumbing component – for example, a faucet or fountain – that includes the associated pipes and valves.

7. I have a sink with a faucet *and* drinking fountain (or a water fountain with a bottle fill station), what do I do?

Fixtures that have multiple taps (such as a sink with a faucet and a drinking fountain, or bottle fill station and drinking fountain) are called “combo fixtures.” Schools will need to do two first draw samples, but only one flush sample for combo fixtures. The flush sample should be from the tap that is easiest to flush for 30 seconds.

See [photo examples of different fixture types](#).

8. What is the tap inventory, and how do I fill it out?

Schools need to complete only one [tap inventory](#) per school. It’s a spreadsheet that serves as a tool to identify which taps need to be tested and how many sample bottles to order for the school.

9. How do I submit the tap inventory?

Send your tap inventory as an attachment to LeadSchool@vermont.gov. Write “Tap Inventory” in the subject line. Include the following in the body of the email:

- First and last name
- Phone number
- School name

Someone from the Health Department will contact you if more information is needed.

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10. How do we order test kits?

The Health Department will order test kits for schools and send an email to schools for any required sample collection that needs to be done.

Test kits for new taps, or changes to existing taps, can be requested by sending an email to LeadSchool@vermont.gov. Please include the type of fixture and number of bottles you need (two samples per tap, except for combo fixtures which need three, and ice machines which need one). Remember to add the information for this tap on your tap inventory so you can keep track of results and remediation.

11. What are the testing procedures? How do we collect water samples?

Collecting water samples is simple and does not require in-depth knowledge or training. The samples will be collected in 250 mL (milliliter) bottles.

Each school will collect two samples at each tap identified on the tap inventory – a first draw and a flush. One exception is for combo fixtures (for example, a sink with a faucet and a drinking fountain, or bottle fill station and drinking fountain). Those fixtures will have two first draw samples, but only one flush sample. The flush sample should be from the tap that is easiest to flush for 30 seconds. Another exception is for ice machines. Ice machines will only have one first draw sample.

A Water Sample Worksheet needs to be filled out for each sample that is collected.

12. When do we need to sample?

Collect all samples during your scheduled sample collection week. Collect samples first thing in the morning after the water has been sitting in the pipes for 8 to 18 hours. Make sure you collect all of the samples before the water starts being used for the day. Don't sample the first day back after a weekend, holiday, or vacation.

13. In what order do I take the samples?

Take all first draw samples first, then go back and collect all flush samples. Start closest to where the water enters your building by starting with the lowest floor and then working your way up and out of the building.

14. How much time will it take to collect samples?

It takes only a couple of minutes to collect one water sample. The amount of time to collect all the samples depends on the size of the school and the number of taps that you are collecting samples from. In smaller buildings, it may take less than one hour,

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while larger buildings may need to split their sample collection into multiple mornings.

Returning Samples to the Lab

1. How do we get samples to the Lab?

Schools have one week to collect samples. Samples will be picked up directly from each school by a courier on the pickup date arranged by the Health Department Lab, or through return UPS shipping. A fluorescent pink notice will be included in the box of sample bottles sent to the schools that will indicate when schools can start collecting water samples and when their scheduled pickup day is, or return shipping information.

2. What do I need to include in the box being sent back to the Lab?

Include the sample bottles and the Water Sample Worksheet in the box. Be sure to screw the caps on tightly and use packing material to make sure they don't move around.

3. What if I already ordered sample bottles but forgot to include a tap?

If you already ordered your sample bottles and forgot to include a tap that needs to be sampled under the law, email LeadSchool@vermont.gov. Please include the type of fixture and number of bottles you need (two samples per tap, except for combo fixtures which need three and ice machines which need one). Remember to add the information for this tap on your tap inventory so you can keep track of results and remediation. You will receive instructions on returning them to the Lab.

Test Results and Remediation

1. How long will it take to get results?

You will receive your results by email 8 to 12 weeks after the samples are returned to the Lab.

2. How are the results being communicated and where will the results be made available?

Results will be emailed to school administrators and child care providers (if there is a licensed preschool or afterschool program that operates in your school). Schools are

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responsible for notifying parents, guardians and staff of the results within 10 business days of receiving them.

Find [letter templates to use for notification](#) and [translations in nine languages](#).

If there is a licensed preschool or afterschool program that operates in your school, schools must also provide the results and letters to licensed child care providers so the programs can send the letters out within 10 business days of the schools receiving the results from the Lab.

The results will be posted on the [Results Website](#). Results for a licensed child care program (preschool or afterschool) that operates in a school will be listed under the school's name.

3. What happens if results are at or above 4 ppb?

If lead levels are found to be at or above 4 ppb, schools must immediately stop using the tap for drinking and cooking.

After the problem has been addressed, and the fixture has been flushed for a few minutes twice a day for 3 weeks, schools must do a follow-up test to make sure the water is safe before using the tap again.

Refer to the [Remediation Guidance](#).

For further assistance, talk to a state remediation expert to determine your next steps. Contact DEC staff: Catie Bartone at 802-272-0411 or catharine.bartone@vermont.gov.

4. What does it mean if the *first draw* result is at or above 4 ppb, but the *flush* is below 4 ppb?

The likely source of lead is the fixture.

Refer to the [Remediation Guidance](#).

For further assistance, talk to a state remediation expert to determine your next steps. Contact DEC staff: Catie Bartone at 802-272-0411 or catharine.bartone@vermont.gov.

5. What does it mean if the *flush* result is at or above 4 ppb, but the *first draw* is below 4 ppb?

The likely source of lead is the plumbing.

Refer to the [Remediation Guidance](#).

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For further assistance, talk to a state remediation expert to determine your next steps. Contact DEC staff: Catie Bartone at 802-272-0411 or catharine.bartone@vermont.gov.

6. What does it mean if the first draw *and* the flush results are at or above 4 ppb?

The probable source of lead is the plumbing, or the plumbing **and** the fixture, but not the fixture alone.

Refer to the [Remediation Guidance](#).

For further assistance, talk to a state remediation expert to determine your next steps. Contact DEC staff: Catie Bartone at 802-272-0411 or catharine.bartone@vermont.gov.

7. What happens if lead is found in the water, but the levels are below 4 ppb?

No remediation action is required. Schools must still notify parents, guardians and staff of the results.

Please note that there is no safe level of exposure to lead. The Health Department recommends that lead levels in water be as close to zero as possible. However, there is no remediation funding for fixing taps that are below 4 ppb.

You may choose to remediate taps below 4 ppb, however this is not required by law and there is no remediation funding for taps below 4 ppb. If you choose to complete this voluntary remediation, determine the best permanent remediation action, then enter the details of what you did in the [Voluntary Remediation Form](#). Your voluntary remediation actions will appear on the Results Website. Any fixture replacements will still require follow-up testing to make sure lead levels are below 4 ppb. Follow-up testing costs will be covered by the State.

8. Who pays for the remediation?

School districts, supervisory unions and independent schools will be reimbursed for the actual cost of replacing a drinking water fixture up to a maximum amount.

Receipts or invoices will need to be submitted to the Health Department for reimbursement.

The maximum amount for each type of fixture is:

- Public drinking fountains and ice machines: \$1,800.00
- Fixtures used for cooking: \$650.00
- All other fixtures in schools: \$350.00

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9. Is any follow-up testing needed?

After the problem has been fixed and the fixture has been flushed for a few minutes twice a day for 3 weeks, schools should do another test to make sure the water is below 4 ppb.

See the “Follow-up Testing” section for more details.

10. What if I decide to remove a fixture instead of replacing it?

When reviewing your possible remediation actions, you may choose “permanent fixture removal.” If you choose this, you must physically remove the faucet or fountain and cap the supply pipes. Sink basins can stay in place so there aren’t holes in the countertop.

Follow-up Testing

1. The taps have been remediated. What are my next steps?

1. Once you have recorded your permanent remediation actions in ANR Online for all taps that were at or above 4 ppb, you will receive an email notifying you that you are ready for follow-up testing. This email will include a tap inventory specifically for these taps. Use this to help you collect follow-up samples. Sample bottles will be mailed to you within 2 to 3 weeks.
2. When you receive the notification email, begin flushing these taps. For **3 weeks before you start collecting samples**, turn on the remediated taps to run water through the new fixtures or plumbing for a **few minutes twice a day**.
3. Collect water samples by following the instructions included in the box, which are the same for the initial water samples you took.
4. Return samples to the Lab either by courier or UPS. The Lab will call you to discuss which return option you will use. (See Q4 for more details.)
5. Test results will be emailed to you within 8 to 12 weeks.
 - If a result is below 4 ppb, no further action is required.
 - If a result is at or above 4 ppb, then refer to the [Remediation Guidance](#). Consult with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for help in determining the next best remediation action. Contact Catie Bartone at 802-272-0411 or catharine.bartone@vermont.gov.

Go to the [Follow-Up Testing section](#) for more details on each of these steps.

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2. How do we get test kits for follow-up testing?

Once you have recorded your permanent remediation actions in ANR Online for all taps that were at or above 4 ppb, you will receive an email notifying you that you are ready for follow-up testing. Sample bottles will be mailed to you 2 to 3 weeks after that.

Follow-up test kits and shipping costs to and from the Lab are covered by the State.

3. When can we take follow-up water samples?

After installing new fixtures and plumbing, it is important to flush them before taking follow-up water samples. This will remove any residual lead that may be left over. **For 3 weeks, turn the tap on for a few minutes twice a day.** Wait until the water gets and stays cold, which tells you the water is coming from the water main.

4. How do we get follow-up samples back to the Lab?

The Lab will call your school to coordinate how to get the sample bottles back to the Lab. There are two options:

1. Courier pickup

- Screw the caps on tightly.
- Pack the samples and Water Sample Worksheet securely in any box(es) using packing materials to make sure they don't move around.
- Label the box(es) with your school name.
- Leave the packed box(es) at the front desk or main office for courier pickup.

2. UPS

- On the same day you collect your water samples, call UPS to schedule a pickup at your school or drop off the box(es) at a [UPS Store](#) Monday through Thursday (not on a Friday, a weekend, or a holiday).. Water samples must reach the Lab within one week of collection.
- Screw the caps on tightly.
- Pack the samples and Water Sample Worksheet securely in any box(es) using packing materials to make sure they don't move around.
- Seal the box with packing tape and place the return shipping label on the box, covering the original shipping label. (A pre-paid return shipping label will be included in the box of sample bottles mailed to you.)

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- If you are scheduling a pickup: Call UPS at 1-800-742-5877.
 - When calling UPS, say “schedule a pickup” and then “agent” to get a live representative.
 - Provide your tracking number and the date and the time you want the driver to do the pickup.
 - There is no cost for shipping. If you are asked to pay, say “bill to original shipper.”

5. When will we receive follow-up sample results?

Results will be emailed to school administrators within 8 to 12 weeks. One week after receiving the results, they will be posted on the [Results Website](#).

6. Do we need to send notification when we receive our follow-up results?

No, you may direct parents, guardians and staff to the [Results Website](#) to view follow-up test results.

Cost Reimbursement

1. Do I have to pay for remediation?

Schools need to pay for all costs associated with remediation actions upfront. However, reimbursement is available for costs to remediate any taps with lead levels at or above 4 ppb. The maximum amount for each type of fixture is:

- Public drinking fountains and ice machines: \$1,800.00
- Taps used for cooking: \$650.00
- All other taps in schools: \$350.00

2. What is the reimbursement amount?

School districts, supervisory unions and independent schools will be reimbursed for the actual cost of replacing a drinking water fixture, up to a maximum amount.

Receipts or invoices will need to be submitted to the Health Department. The maximum amount for each type of fixture is:

- Public drinking fountains and ice machines: \$1,800.00
- Taps used for cooking: \$650.00
- All other taps in schools: \$350.00

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3. Does the reimbursement cover parts and labor?

Schools will be reimbursed for parts and labor up to the allowable amount per fixture if a reimbursement request is received including the required documentation.

4. Does fixture replacement include some plumbing?

Plumbing replacement that is associated with the installation of a new fixture is reimbursable, although it will count towards the maximum reimbursable amount. For example, the cost to replace a tap used for cooking is \$400 and the plumbing replacement associated with the installation is \$350, the school would be reimbursed \$650.

5. Are filters on the tap reimbursable, and if so, for how much?

Yes, if DEC confirms that filters are the best remediation option, then schools may be reimbursed for the cost of the first filter. However, the costs associated with ongoing filter maintenance and replacement costs are the school's responsibility.

6. Can facilities managers who do the work themselves be reimbursed?

Yes, labor can be reimbursed if the facilities managers do the work themselves. Labor must be included in the itemized costs by fixture in the request submitted for reimbursement.

7. What do I need to send in to be reimbursed?

Use the [online Reimbursement Request](#) to submit your request.

Before you begin, please make sure you can:

- Send a copy of all receipts and invoices electronically (combining them into a single file is recommended, if possible). You will be asked to attach them when prompted.
- Enter total replacement costs by fixture (including parts and labor).
- Identify each tap you are requesting reimbursement for by its initial first draw Lab ID#. You can find the initial first draw Lab ID# by looking up your results on the [Results Website](#) and clicking on "Tap Summary Cards."

NOTE: The online form is easier to complete on a computer than on a mobile device.

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If you are unable to complete the request using the online form, you may use the [Reimbursement Request document](#) to submit your request instead. Mail this document with accompanying receipts and invoices to:

Vermont Department of Health
Attn: Business Office
PO Box 70
Burlington, VT 05402

8. What information needs to be included on a reimbursement request?

You will be asked to:

- Send a copy of all receipts and invoices electronically (combining them into a single file is recommended, if possible). You will be asked to attach them when prompted.
- Enter total replacement costs by fixture (including parts and labor).
- Identify each tap you are requesting reimbursement for by its initial first draw Lab ID#. You can find the initial first draw Lab ID# by looking up your results on the [Results Website](#) and clicking on “Tap Summary Cards.”

9. What if I can't complete the online reimbursement request?

If you can't complete the online request, you may use the [Reimbursement Request document](#) to submit your request instead. Mail the completed document, with all receipts and invoices to:

Vermont Department of Health
Attn: Business Office
PO Box 70
Burlington, VT 05402

10. Should receipts and invoices be submitted all at once?

The Health Department recommends that each school submit one reimbursement request, with receipts included as backup documentation, once all remediation and follow-up testing has been completed and results are below 4 ppb. The request can be consolidated by school district or supervisory union.

11. Can reimbursement requests be submitted more than once?

The Health Department recommends that each school submit one reimbursement request for all remediation.

12. When can I expect to receive my reimbursement?

Payment will be received within 30 days after the Health Department receives an error-free invoice. If there is an error found on your invoice, the Health Department will reach out to request a new invoice. The Health Department will use your State of Vermont Vendor ID to issue payment, which will be made in your preferred method of payment.

If you are unsure if you already have a State of Vermont Vendor ID, please email AHS.VDHAccountsPayable@vermont.gov.

General Questions About Lead and Lead Poisoning

1. What is lead?

Lead is a highly toxic metal that has been commonly used in many household, industrial and automobile products—such as paint, solder, batteries, brass, car radiators, bullets, pottery, etc. Exposure to lead is a public health concern in Vermont.

2. How does lead make you sick?

Lead is a toxic metal that is harmful to human health. Lead can harm anyone, but children under the age of six are at special risk. Children are most susceptible to the effects of lead because their bodies are still developing, and they absorb lead more easily than adults do. Lead can affect children's development in many ways, but it can cause particular harm to the central nervous system (brain).

There is no safe level of lead in the body. Even low blood lead levels in a child's body can slow growth, make it hard to learn, and cause behavior problems. Most children who have lead poisoning or high levels of lead exposure do not look or act sick.

3. What are common sources for lead exposure?

Sources include dust from deteriorated lead-based paint, toys, keys, jewelry, pottery, dishes, contaminated soil, old plumbing pipes and fixtures in homes, imported candy and foods, and antique, vintage and salvaged goods.

While a major source of lead poisoning in Vermont children is paint, lead in plumbing pipes and fixtures can add to a child's overall lead exposure.

Learn more about [lead hazards and lead poisoning](#).

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4. How does lead get into drinking water?

Lead can get into drinking water as the water moves through plumbing components that contain lead, such as brass fixtures or solder with a high lead content. There have been several advances to remove lead from plumbing components over the years but depending on the age of the plumbing materials, there may be varying levels of lead content. In addition, water that sits in lead plumbing and fixtures for longer periods of time will contain higher levels of lead.

Learn more about [lead in your drinking water at home](#).

5. Should a child be tested for lead if there were results at or above 4 ppb in a school's drinking water?

Probably not. Any time a child's test shows an elevated blood lead level (at or above 5 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$), the Health Department tries to identify the source of the exposure. By testing all schools and requiring remediation, we will be certain that any exposure from drinking water at a school has been identified and reduced.

When deciding whether to test a child for lead in response to a school's water test results, it is important to understand that the possible exposure to lead from drinking the water at school may only be a part of the picture.

We can't know how much water an individual child drank at school, so the amount of exposure is unknown. There may also be additional considerations that would prompt a blood lead test, including:

- exposure to lead in a house or apartment building built before 1978 (dust from lead paint is a leading source of exposure) or an adult who has occupational exposure to lead
- previously identified behavioral or academic problems
- parental concern and desire to know if the child has been exposed

All children should be screened for lead at age 1 and again at age 2 by their health care provider. Talk to your child's health care provider if you have questions about your child's lead exposure.

Learn more about [lead hazards and lead poisoning](#).

6. Should families or staff test their home's water for lead?

Since you can't see, taste or smell lead in water, testing is the only sure way to know whether there are harmful levels of lead in your drinking water.

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If you're on a private source of water (for example, a well or spring), a lead test is included in the standard homeowner's water test kits from the Health Department Lab.

Learn more about [testing your well water for lead and other contaminants](#).

If you're on a public water supply (for example, town water), you can check with your town or water supplier for the Consumer Confidence Report (or find it online), which will tell you the level of lead found in your water system. However, lead can get into your drinking water from contact with lead in plumbing and fixtures in your home, so the Health Department recommends that people on public water—especially if they live in an older home (pre-1986)—test their kitchen tap or any other tap used for consumption (for example, drinking, cooking, food prep, making bottles and brushing teeth) for lead.

To test your own home for lead in drinking water, call the Health Department Laboratory to order first draw and flush lead test kits for \$12 each at 802-338-4736 or 800-660-9997.

Learn more about [lead in your drinking water at home](#).

7. Should I stop drinking my home's water if high levels of lead are found?

If the level of lead is above 0.001 mg/L (1 ppb), the Health Department recommends taking action to lower lead levels in your water. Consider installing a treatment system to remove lead, replacing pipes or plumbing fixtures and fittings, drinking and preparing food with bottled water, or getting water from a known safe source.

Find [information on treatment systems](#).

Schools are required to take the tap out of service, which means to stop using it, if levels are found at or above 4 ppb and until a fix is made and follow-up testing shows that water from that tap is below 4 ppb.

8. Do water filters remove lead?

Not all water filters will remove lead. The filter must meet NSF/ANSI Standard 53 or 58. Filters must be replaced according to manufacturer instructions to ensure the filter continues to remove lead. Recommendations are listed in the product's owner manual or on the product's packaging.

Frequently Asked Questions: Testing for Lead in School Drinking Water

9. If there are high levels of lead in my drinking water at home, is it safe for pets to drink?

In general, if the water is not recommended for humans to drink, then it's best not to give it to pets.

Lead is toxic to small animals (dogs and cats), but the exposure usually comes from home renovations that create lead paint dust that pets lick off surfaces, not from water.