

Lead in Drinking Water – Public and Nonpublic Schools

IMPORTANT NOTICE: ELEVATED WATER SAMPLE RESULT(S) **Southwest Academy**

ELEVATED LEAD WATER SAMPLE RESULT(S)

All Maryland public and nonpublic schools are required to sample all drinking water sources for the presence of lead pursuant to the Code of Maryland Regulations. On December 7, 2019, 3 water samples were collected from Southwest Academy. Of these water samples, one (1) had levels of lead exceeding the action level of 20 parts per billion (ppb) for lead in drinking water in school buildings. These were samples from fixtures that were repaired in the past year. The elevated lead results from the sample(s) collected at Southwest Academy were as follows:

23.3 parts per billion (ppb) Fountain, Café by serving line

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS TAKEN

Flushed samples were taken from all fixtures with elevated levels, which were then turned off on February 18, 2020. A work order was submitted to have these fixtures remediated. Bottled water will continue to be provided for drinking.

NEXT STEPS

The fixture will be remediated. It will not be returned to operation until it has been sampled and found to be below the action level. Upon completion of this action a notification will be sent to the school community. Bottled drinking water will continue to be provided until all drinking water fixtures are sampled and found to be below the action level.

ACTION LEVEL (AL)

The AL is 20 ppb for lead in drinking water in school buildings. The AL is the concentration of lead which, if exceeded, triggers required remediation.

LOCAL AND FEDERAL DRINKING WATER STANDARDS

Without being required to do so, BCPS has tested school drinking fountains for lead since 2016. There are no federal regulations for schools regarding drinking water. The federal Clean Drinking Water Act requires public water systems to test for lead. Nine of our schools have well systems, and those systems have tested for lead as required.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEAD

Lead can cause serious health problems if too much enters your body from drinking water or other sources. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of your body. The greatest risk of lead exposure is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. Lead is stored in the bones and it can be released later in life. During pregnancy, the fetus receives lead from the mother's bones, which may affect brain development. Scientists have linked the effects of lead on the brain with lowered IQ in children. Adults with kidney problems and high blood pressure can be affected by low levels of lead more than healthy adults.

SOURCES OF HUMAN EXPOSURE TO LEAD

There are many different sources of human exposure to lead. These include: lead-based paint, lead-contaminated dust or soil, some plumbing materials, certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, food, and cosmetics, exposure in the work place and exposure from certain hobbies, brass faucets, fittings, and valves. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 10 to 20 percent of a person's potential exposure to lead may come from drinking water, while for an infant consuming formula mixed with lead-containing water this may increase to 40 to 60 percent.

HOW CONSUMERS CAN REDUCE EXPOSURE TO LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

1. Run your water to flush out lead: If water hasn't been used for several hours, run water for 15 to 30 seconds or until it becomes cold or reaches a steady temperature before using it for drinking or cooking.
2. Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula. If lead was present in the plumbing, it would dissolve more easily in hot water.

Please note that boiling the water will not reduce lead levels.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. For additional information, please contact David Glassman, Supervisor, Environmental Services at 443.809.6310 or dglassman2@bcps.org.
2. For additional information about reducing lead exposure around your home/building and the health effects of lead, visit EPA's website at www.epa.gov/lead.
3. If you are concerned about exposure, contact your healthcare provider. If you do not have a healthcare provider, please contact the Baltimore County Department of Health at 410.887.3725.