

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



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Governor

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Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

Frequently Asked Questions About Lead

How do children become exposed to lead?

Stories about lead-contaminated drinking water and potential public health impacts have received much attention recently. It is important to recognize all the ways a child can be exposed to lead. Children are exposed to lead in paint, dust, soil, air and food, as well as drinking water. Lead-based paint remains the most widespread and dangerous source of exposure.

How does lead get into drinking water?

Lead can enter drinking water through the corrosion of plumbing materials. Schools constructed prior to 1986, when the Safe Drinking Water Act was amended to largely ban lead usage in plumbing, are more likely to have some lead within their plumbing systems. The amount of lead that enters the plumbing water can be affected by the chemistry of the water, how much lead is in the plumbing material, how long the water stays in contact with the plumbing material, and the presence of protective scales or coatings inside the plumbing.

How is lead regulated in the state of Florida?

In 1991, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published a regulation to control lead and copper in drinking water. This regulation is known as the Lead and Copper Rule (also referred to as the LCR).

In Florida, the state Department of Environmental Protection implements EPA's regulations and ensures a safe and sustainable supply of water for residents and visitors through regulation of public water systems.

Public water systems, such as the City of Tallahassee, are required to ensure that potable water entering schools, homes and other buildings does not contain excessive lead levels.

Most schools get their water from public water systems and are not required to meet the requirements of the LCR, as it is the public water system's primary responsibility.

What are the drinking water standards for lead?

For lead, EPA established an enforceable procedure. The treatment technique regulation for lead requires water systems to control the corrosivity of the water. The LCR requires systems to monitor drinking water at customer taps. If lead concentrations exceed an action level of 15 ppb or copper concentrations exceed an action level of 1.3 ppm in more than 10% of customer taps sampled, the system must make changes to control corrosion.

How can lead affect my health?

During the past 50 years, we have learned a lot about how low levels of lead can affect people's health. It is now known that children are especially susceptible to low-level lead toxicity, which can affect behavior and learning. The risk of illness, however, increases as the level of chemical increases and

the length of time you drink the water increases. The type and severity of health effects associated with exposure to a particular chemical depends on a number of factors:

- How much of the chemical was someone exposed to each time?
- How long did the exposure last?
- How often did the exposure occur?
- What was the route of exposure (eating, drinking or breathing?)

What can I do to protect my child?

While the data provided by the Leon County School Board shows that lead exposure risks from drinking water are low, we want to provide the public with clear information about the potential negative health effects.

Dust from lead-based paint is the most common source of lead poisoning for children in the United States.

What can you do?

- Fix peeling lead paint and make home repairs safely;
- Wash dust from repairs off hands, toys, windows and floors;
- Keep lead out of your food and tap water: Let tap water run for one minute before using it, if it hasn't been run for a few hours;
- Only use cold tap water for drinking, cooking and making baby formula;
- Use lead-free dishes;
- Feed your children a diet high in calcium, iron and vitamin C: these foods keep lead from being absorbed or stored in your child's body;
- Buy a carbon-based faucet-mount filter for your home. Keep in mind that many pitcher filters are not certified to remove lead and do not work as well for this purpose.

When should my child be tested for lead?

- Your doctor can help you decide if you or your child should be tested for lead. You may also want to test the water, dirt and paint in your home to see if they contain lead. Lead poisoning levels peak in children between the ages of 12 and 36 months of age and should be tested.
- Medicaid-eligible children are required to be tested at 12 and 24 months of age and between 36 and 72 months if not previously tested.
- Parents should ask their provider to test their child's blood for lead if they are concerned their child may have been exposed to lead.

You can find additional information on [lead and health](#) on the department's web site and at the US Centers for Disease Control and [Prevention](#).