

# SAFE DRINKING WATER – CHECKING FOR LEAD



*The United States Navy is committed to protecting the health of Sailors, civilian employees, and their families by providing safe drinking water. Drinking water quality, including testing for lead, is monitored throughout the installation. It is Navy policy to follow U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines for testing and sampling of water outlets from which children may drink at installation schools and childcare centers.*

## WHAT IS LEAD?

- Lead is a naturally occurring metal that can be harmful if inhaled or swallowed in elevated quantities.
- Lead can be found in air, soil, dust, food, and water, and is common in plumbing materials and water service lines.
- Exposure to elevated levels of lead can result in adverse health effects.

## WHAT ARE THE HEALTH RISKS OF LEAD EXPOSURE?

- Lead poses a significant health risk to young children up to the age of six, especially infants and fetuses, where the danger is very severe.
- Growing children absorb lead more rapidly and are negatively impacted by a level of lead exposure that would have little effect on an adult.
- A child's mental and physical development can be irreversibly impaired by over-exposure to lead.
- The EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20% or more of a person's total lead exposure.
- Infants who consume mostly mixed formula can receive 40% to 60% of their exposure to lead from drinking water.

## HOW DOES LEAD GET INTO A FACILITY'S DRINKING WATER?

- Even though drinking water from water treatment plants may meet federal, state, local and overseas standards, a facility may still encounter elevated lead levels at the outlet or spigot due to lead in plumbing materials.
- The most common cause is corrosion of materials containing lead in the water distribution system, such as plumbing pipes, solder, water coolers, and faucets.
- Many factors contribute to corrosion, including the acidity of the water, and when water stands in the plumbing system for prolonged periods of time.

## HOW MUCH LEAD IN DRINKING WATER IS TOO MUCH?

- EPA set a guidance level of 20 parts per billion (ppb) in childcare settings to protect children who are exposed to lead in drinking water on a chronic basis.
- The EPA standard is intended to give ample time to correct deficiencies before they reach unacceptable levels.
- When sampling results show lead levels exceeding 20 ppb, those fountains and outlets are taken out of service until remediation is complete.

## PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY TESTING VS. TESTING AT SCHOOLS (15 ppb vs 20 ppb)

- 🔍 The lead testing protocol used by public water systems is aimed at identifying system-wide problems rather than problems at outlets in individual buildings.
- The EPA standard for schools is intended to target water fountains and other outlets used for consumption and represents the highest concentration usually found.

## WHAT IS REMEDIATION?

- Remediation refers to both short- and long-term actions taken to reduce the levels of lead in drinking water if test results indicate a lead issue at a childcare facility.

## WHAT ARE THE MEDICAL CONCERNS?

- Lead exposure can be detected using a blood test to measure the amount of lead in the child.
- For those staff and parents of children who attend Ikego Elementary School who have health concerns regarding risks from exposure to lead in drinking water, you are encouraged to discuss this issue with your primary health care provider.
- USNH is working closely with CFAY to ensure all those who may have been exposed can receive testing. Your provider will determine if a treatment plan is necessary for you or your child by the results of the blood lead test.

## WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

- The CFAY Public Affairs Office at 243-3003 can provide more information about the installation's water supply.
- If you have health-related questions or concerns about lead effects, you are encouraged to contact your primary care provider. The U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka's lead point of contact is LCDR Erin Ocker-Reza, who can be reached at 243-5505.
- Primary Care appointments can be made through the central appointment line at 243-5352, or through the pediatric clinic 243-5505 and family medicine clinic 243-8721/8633.
- More information on the health effects of lead can be found on the U.S. EPA website at <https://www.epa.gov/lead> or the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/default.htm> or [https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/acclpp/lead\\_levels\\_in\\_children\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/acclpp/lead_levels_in_children_fact_sheet.pdf)