



Detroit Health Department

Helpful information about lead safety and testing

To help ensure the safety of Detroiters and make sure it is following national best practices, the Detroit Health Department is seeing to it that the water in Detroit's schools, pre-schools, Head Start centers, day cares and child care centers is safe to drink.

To make sure the testing is done properly, we are requiring that this testing be done by a facility that is certified by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

The EPA limit for the presence of lead in water to be considered safe for drinking is 15 parts per billion (PPB). Most recent tests conducted of water being distributed by the City is well within EPA Guidelines, averaging 2.3 PPB.

If elevated levels of lead are found as a result of any of these tests, the school is expected to immediately shut down water outlets at the facility. These schools are expected to ensure that the drinking water throughout the entire school is immediately retested. Bottled water will be provided for all students and staff.

Should your child be tested for lead poisoning?

All children under the age of six in Detroit and other cities with older homes should be tested annually for lead. To have your child tested, you should make an appointment to take your child to their pediatrician or health care provider. Call the toll-free number on the back of your child's health insurance card.

You can also make an appointment at Children's Hospital Pediatrics. Call 313-745-KIDS (5437).

The Detroit Health Department also provides lead testing at its clinics at Samaritan Center (313-410-8142; at 5555 Connor, Detroit, MI 48213) or Family Place (313-410-7803; at 8726 Woodward Ave., Detroit MI, 48202).

Family Place is by-appointment only, while Samaritan Center takes walk-ins. The clinics are open 8 a.m.-5 p.m., except between noon-1 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. It is open 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesdays, except it is closed from 1 p.m.-2 p.m.

If your child does not have medical coverage, check to see if he or she is Medicaid eligible. Go to www.mibridges.michigan.gov/access for information.

How to prevent lead poisoning - FAQs

Q: What is lead?



Detroit Health Department

A: Lead is a toxic metal that is harmful if inhaled or swallowed, especially in small children. Lead was added to paints used in homes before 1978 and can be found in old painted surfaces and water fixtures, dust and soil. It also was previously used to solder water pipes.

Q. What can I do to minimize my risk of lead exposure?

A. You can limit your exposure to lead by flushing your tap water any time the tap has gone unused for more than a couple of hours. Let your water run 1-2 minutes before using the water for drinking or cooking. Flushing clears standing water from your plumbing and service line.

Q: How does lead poisoning happen?

A: Lead is either inhaled or swallowed. The vast majority of lead poisoning in Detroit is related to aging houses with peeling and cracking lead paint. When lead paint in the house cracks or peels, it can create lead dust. Young children may inhale lead dust or consume paint chips. Children often have contact with lead dust by crawling or putting their hands and toys in their mouths.

Q: Who is at risk for lead poisoning?

A: Children ages 6 and younger are at the greatest risk because they are still growing and developing. Exposure to lead can result in delays in physical and mental development for small children. Pregnant women and nursing mothers are also at risk and should avoid exposure to lead to protect their children. Adults can also suffer from lead poisoning, which usually results in aches, pains, and feeling tired all the time. However, there are few long term effects of lead poisoning in adults.

Q: How is lead poisoning treated?

A. It depends on how high the lead level is. At a very high level, an individual should be hospitalized so that the lead can be removed from his or her blood. At lower levels, steps should be taken to eliminate the exposure to lead while the body clears the lead itself.