

Ontario Regulation 243/07 (Schools, Private Schools and Child Care Centres)

Communications for Changes Effective July 1, 2017

Fact Sheet for Parents

Safe Drinking Water in Child Care Centres and Schools

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Why does the Ontario government require child care centres and schools to test drinking water for lead?

Young children are more vulnerable to the effects of lead because they absorb ingested lead more easily than adults, which can interfere with the development of their nervous systems. In population studies, exposure to lead has been associated with effects on learning capacity, intellectual development and behavior.

How will the new rules coming into effect in July 2017 better protect children in child care centres and schools?

Ontario is proactively strengthening its regulation to protect children's health. Studies¹ show that lead levels in drinking water from plumbing can vary substantially between individual taps or fountains. Only by testing each drinking water fixture can child care centres and schools be sure that they are not exposing children to lead through any of the plumbing within their facilities.

What is the drinking water quality standard for lead?

The Ontario drinking water quality standard for lead is 10 micrograms per litre. This standard is based on a national guideline set by Health Canada.

¹ World Health Organization: Lead Poisoning and Blood.

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs379/en/>

What happens if a child care centre or school finds it has lead in its drinking water above the standard for lead?

If a child care centre or school gets a drinking water test result that is above the standard for lead, the local Medical Officer of Health will assign corrective actions to the facility and it is the facility's responsibility to ensure those actions are carried out. The Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change will follow up with the facility operator and local Medical Officer of Health if necessary. These local processes have been in place since 2007 and are working well.

How can I find out the lead test results for my child's child care centre or school?

If you have questions about measures taken by your local child care centre or school to ensure the safety of drinking water, contact your local child care centre, school, or school board.

Why are child care centres and schools required to flush their plumbing?

Flushing has been shown to reduce lead levels in drinking water fixtures. By flushing plumbing and fixtures, water that may have come in contact with lead plumbing is replaced with fresh water. How often a facility has to flush their plumbing and fixtures depends on several factors including the age of the plumbing, previous lead test results or if a device that removes lead, such as a filter, has been installed on a fixture.

How are people exposed to lead?

Lead is a naturally occurring element. Lead has many industrial uses and has been found in water systems since the late 1800s. It is also present in soil, food and indoor dust. Over the past few decades, exposure to lead has significantly decreased due to restrictions in the use of lead in gasoline, paint and solder.

How does lead get into drinking water?

Ontario's surface and groundwater generally does not contain lead. If lead does
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