

Early Learning and Child Care

Lead in Drinking Water Grant Extension, Compliance Program and Public Reporting

Frequently Asked Questions

Circular #: 2023-07

1. What is lead?

Lead is a soft, heavy metal present in our environment. In the past, lead was used in the manufacturing of many products. Lead exposure has greatly reduced over the last 40 years due to the removal of lead in paint, gasoline, plumbing products, and more.

2. What are the possible health impacts of lead on children?

Low level lead exposure has been associated with effects on intellectual development and behavior of children. However, exposure to lead poses a risk to everyone's health. Other health effects, such as effects on blood pressure, have also been associated with relatively low levels of exposure.

3. How does lead get into drinking water?

Lead is not natural to Manitoba waters. It is introduced to drinking water through corrosion of lead piping, solder, fixtures and service lines within older homes and buildings. For this reason, effective monitoring of lead levels requires collecting test samples from drinking water taps.

4. Why should child care centres have their water tested?

In 2019, Health Canada updated the national guideline for lead in drinking water following new studies indicating health impacts occur at lower levels of lead exposure than previously identified. The new guideline lowered the acceptable maximum concentration of lead in drinking water (from 0.01mg/L to 0.005mg/L), and recommended testing drinking water at school taps and drinking water fountains. Manitoba adopted this guideline in 2020.

Infants and young children are most sensitive to lead exposure due to their developing brains. Low levels of lead exposure has been associated with effects on intellectual development and behavior. To protect children, all child care centres should be testing all their drinking water taps to determine if their lead levels are below the guidelines, and if they are not, taking measures to address the problem as soon as possible.

5. How do child care centres know if there is lead in their drinking water?

You cannot see, taste, or smell lead in water. Testing at the tap is the only way to find out if there is lead in the drinking water. To effectively test for lead, centres are encouraged to ensure all fixtures and faucets used for drinking water or food preparation are tested.

To start the testing process, download the [Water Fixture Test Application Form](#), fill it out and email the completed form to drinkingwater@meia.mb.ca.

- Once approved, the information will be sent to the accredited laboratory who will provide you with a water sampling kit and instructions on how to collect water samples for testing.
- When the sampling is complete, send the samples back to the lab.
- Test results may take several weeks. You will receive an emailed copy of all the test results and any elevated lead results will be identified on the report.

6. If test results show lead levels in drinking water are above the national guideline, what actions can child care centres take?

When elevated test results are received, public health officials recommend that corrective action be taken as soon as possible to prevent children's exposure to increased lead in drinking water from these fixtures and faucets.

- Such action could include removing handles or otherwise preventing the taps from being used for drinking water and providing an alternative source of drinking water.
- These interim measures should be taken to prevent exposure until mitigation work is complete and proven successful (i.e. retesting results indicate that lead levels are below the guideline).

Mitigation actions are longer-term solutions to reduce lead in drinking water, including replacing water fountains and taps, installing filtered water bottle filling stations or reconfiguring the plumbing system.

- Information on how to mitigate lead contamination in drinking water can be found here: [Corrective Actions – Lead](#).
- To apply for the Lead in Drinking Water Grant, download the [Mitigation Grant Application Form](#), fill it out and email the completed forms along with the water test results and a quote(s) for the mitigation work to drinkingwater@meia.mb.ca.

It is essential to retest drinking water following mitigation to ensure the work successfully reduced lead levels.

- Upon completion of mitigation work, all fixtures that had elevated lead prior to mitigation should be retested, following the same procedure as done for initial testing.
- Once test results show that lead is no longer elevated, the project is complete. If mitigation was not successful, then you may reapply for an additional grant.

7. How is the Province helping to support testing and mitigation efforts in child care centres?

The Province established the *Lead in Drinking Water Grant* to provide funding support for the costs for testing for lead in drinking water as well as mitigation actions and retesting, when required.

Environment and Climate has partnered with the Manitoba Environmental Industries Association (MEIA) to administer the grant program. Centres can request up-front support and/or reimbursement for mitigation and re-testing costs from the provincial *Lead in Drinking Water Grant*.

Any centre that has not yet tested or mitigated should visit: <https://meia.mb.ca/lead-in-drinking-water-grant/>.

8. My centre is located in a school (or other shared building), how do I know if testing was completed on the taps in my centre?

If you are co-located and the testing was completed by the building owner, ask the school or the building owner for a copy of your test results.

- If testing was completed, please contact MEIA at drinkingwater@meia.mb.ca for further direction.
- If testing was not completed, please see Question 5.

9. My centre is unfunded. Is my centre eligible for the *Lead in Drinking Water Grant*?

Yes, all licensed child care centres (including nursery schools) in Manitoba are eligible for the grant.

10. Are licensed family/group child care homes eligible for the *Lead in Drinking Water Grant*?

Home-based child care providers are not eligible for the *Lead in Drinking Water for Schools and Child Care Centres Grant*; however, a *Residential Lead Monitoring Program* is being phased in across Manitoba.

When it is available in your community, home-based child care providers are encouraged to participate *Residential Lead Monitoring Program*. Communities currently implementing the program will make a public request for volunteers to have the drinking water in their home tested for lead. Licensed home-based providers are prioritized for this free testing.

Visit <https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/lead/index.html> for information on the *Residential Lead Monitoring Program* and [Lead in Drinking Water: Information for Manitoba Homeowners and Home-based Child Care Providers \(gov.mb.ca\)](#) for further information.

11. Our centre has not completed testing and/or mitigation, how can we prepare for questions from families attending our centre?

If your early learning and child care centre has not yet completed testing or mitigation, it is recommended you prepare responses to the following questions:

- What are your centre's plans for testing the drinking water taps for lead?
- If tests results were elevated, what corrective measures has the centre taken to prevent children from accessing the drinking water with increased concentrations of lead?
- If test results are elevated, what is the centre's plan/schedule for mitigating the source of lead exposure in the drinking water taps?
- When will the centre be publicly communicating the results of their testing for lead in drinking water taps and corrective actions?

12. How can I reduce my family's exposure to lead in drinking water?

The Province has developed a Frequently Asked Questions for Parents document, which will be available on the provincial Lead in Drinking Water webpage. Please direct families to: www.gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/lead/.

13. Where can my child care centre or parents go for more information?

If you have any questions, please consult or reach out to one of the resources or contacts listed on the following page.

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

Direct families to: www.gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/lead/

Lead in Drinking Water Grant FAQs – For Schools and Child Care Centres

[Frequently-Asked-Questions-May-2023.pdf \(meia.mb.ca\)](#)

To support schools and child care centres in their application process under the *Lead in Drinking Water Grant Program*.

For Questions Related to the Lead in Drinking Water Grant

For application forms and more information about the program, please visit: [Lead in Drinking Water Grant - Manitoba Environmental Industries Association \(meia.mb.ca\)](#).

Manitoba Environmental Industries Association

204-783-7090

drinkingwater@meia.mb.ca

[Lead in Drinking Water Grant - Manitoba Environmental Industries Association \(meia.mb.ca\)](#)

Template Letters for Communicating with Parents

Centres are encouraged to share their results with parents, including reporting the results and a description of the corrective action or mitigation work taken to address each elevated fixture/faucet. Manitoba Environment and Climate and Manitoba Health have prepared template letters, which are available at: www.gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/lead/.

For Health-Related Concerns

Visit Manitoba Health's Be Aware of Lead website at:

www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/lead/index.html

If you have any health concerns about lead exposures, you can:

- Contact your local public health office:
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html>
- Call Health Links–Info Santé : 788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll-free)

For Questions on the Status of Testing and Mitigation at a School

For information on testing, correction action and mitigation work conducted at a school, contact the school division or school:

- Manitoba School Divisions and Districts www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/sb_contacts.html
- Schools in Manitoba web.gov.mb.ca/school/school?action=top_page

For Other Inquiries

Office of Drinking Water

204-945-5762

odw@gov.mb.ca

gov.mb.ca/sd/water/drinking-water/