



Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

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Randall W. Williams, MD, FACOG
Director



Michael L. Parson
Governor

August 9, 2019

Dear Missouri School Superintendents:

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are sending this letter as a reminder of our recommendation to school administrators of simple preventative practices to reduce potential lead exposures to students and staff at your facilities by flushing taps and drinking water fountains that have not been in use for an extended time.

Even low blood lead levels in children are associated with poor academic achievement and higher rates of neurobehavioral disorders such as hyperactivity and attention deficits. No safe blood lead level in children has been identified. Because the developmental effects of lead toxicity may be permanent, prevention of lead exposure is key to assuring our children have the best chance at success.

Drinking water supplied by public water systems in Missouri is monitored for lead under state and federal regulation to ensure safety. Nevertheless, even when public water systems supply safe drinking water, lead within a facility's own pipes or fixtures can impact the drinking water. Lead can accumulate to high levels when water sits stagnant in pipes, fixtures, or drinking water fountains for an extended period of time, such as when buildings or facilities are not in use during summer months.

With the funding granted by the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act (WIIN), DHSS will be assisting in voluntary testing for lead contamination in drinking water at schools and child care facilities for the next two years. Priority will be given to low-income areas and facilities that care for children 6 years and younger.

To minimize the potential for students and staff at your school being exposed to lead in drinking water, DHSS and DNR recommend implementing these preventative steps:

- Flush all water lines providing water for drinking or for cooking for 5 to 10 minutes before the start of the school year immediately prior to students' return to the facility.
- Make it a standard daily practice to run water sources used for cooking and drinking for 15 to 30 seconds, or until the water becomes cold and reaches a steady temperature, especially if the water has not been used for several hours.
- Use the cold water tap for drinking and cooking because hot water lines may contain more lead than cold water lines.

Primary prevention is the main focus of reducing lead poisoning for both children and adults. Please contact the DHSS Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program or WIIN Grant Program at (573) 751-6102 if you have further questions about the health effects of lead, lead poisoning prevention tips, or testing your water for lead.

If you have questions about the drinking water supplied to your facilities, contact your public water system or the Department of Natural Resources' Public Drinking Water Branch at (573) 751-1300.

Sincerely,

Randall W. Williams, MD, FACOG
Director
Department of Health & Senior Services

Carol S. Comer
Director
Department of Natural Resources

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