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### Tips to keep children safe from lead in drinking water

Awareness around lead in our drinking water in Portland is rising. Some [schools in Portland](#) and other [locations](#) have had issues with high levels of lead in their drinking water. Head Start has several locations in Portland Public Schools and there are other early learning programs at Portland Parks and Recreation. Children are especially susceptible to lead exposure because their bodies absorb metals at higher rates than adults. We'd like to share some tips that you can share with all staff and in particular, child care licensing staff, to keep everyone safe.

The key steps that need to be taken by child care environments include:

#### **1. Identify sources of lead**

Early learning environments should test all taps used for drinking or food to identify any lead problems. Follow the [Environmental Protection Agency's 3 T's Revised Technical Guidance](#) to ensure that samples for lead are collected properly and from the right places. Use an [Oregon Health Authority-accredited drinking water laboratory](#) to analyze samples for lead.

#### **2. Stop Access**

Prevent access to water taps that have more than 15 parts per billion (ppb) of lead. This should include shutting off taps, covering water fountains, and providing bottled water to students and staff members.

#### **3. Communicate**

Make results from tests for lead in water available to students, families, and the community as quickly as possible.

#### **4. Mitigate and correct**

Replace the sources of lead in building plumbing. Again, EPA 3T's Guidance should be followed.

OHA Drinking Water Services can provide advice and consultation on lead in drinking water (971-673-0405).

In April following the crisis in Flint, Governor Brown asked the Oregon Department of Education and the Oregon Health Authority to review water quality issues in schools and develop a recommendations to provide to the Governor. Those will be finalized soon and ODE will distribute those to you at that time. The Department expects this review will be completed by early summer.



For licensors in the Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington Counties:

- If the child care environments you support are in the following [water districts](#), providers can request a free water test kit.
- Here are [some steps](#) to avoid possible exposure to lead from plumbing:
  - Run your water to flush out lead. If the water has not been used for several hours, run each tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes or until it becomes colder before drinking or cooking. This flushes water which may contain lead from the pipes.
  - Use cold, fresh water for cooking and preparing baby formula. Do not cook with or drink water from the hot water tap; lead dissolves more easily into hot water. Do not use water from the hot water tap to make baby formula.
  - Do not boil water to remove lead. Boiling water will not reduce lead.
  - Consider using a filter. Check whether it reduces lead—not all filters do. Be sure to maintain and replace a filter device in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions to protect water quality. Contact NSF International (1-800-NSF-8010) for information on performance standards for water filters.
  - Consider buying low-lead fixtures. As of 2014, Federal law requires brass faucets, fittings and valves to contain no more than .25 percent lead. These fixtures are labeled as “lead-free.” Visit [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org) to learn more about lead content in plumbing fixtures.
- If providers would like to share with parents where children can be tested for lead exposure, they are available at the following [locations in the region](#).

Thank you for helping kids remain safe this summer!

