

A NOTICE TO PARENTS, GUARDIANS, and STAFF

Gouverneur High School

Lead Testing of School Drinking Water

August 25, 2021

Safe and healthy school environments can foster healthy and successful children. To protect public health, the Public Health Law and New York State Health Department (NYS DOH) regulations require that all public schools and boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES) test lead levels in water from every outlet that is being used, or could potentially be used, for drinking or cooking. If lead is found at any water outlet at levels above 15 parts per billion (ppb), which is equal to 15 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$), the NYS DOH requires that the school take action to reduce the exposure to lead.

What is first draw testing of school drinking water for lead?

The “on-again, off-again” nature of water use at most schools can raise lead levels in school drinking water. Water that remains in pipes overnight, over a weekend, or over vacation periods stays in contact with lead pipes or lead solder and, as a result, could contain higher levels of lead. Therefore, schools are required to collect a sample after the water has been sitting in the plumbing system for a certain period. This “first draw” sample is likely to show higher levels of lead for that outlet than what you would see if you sampled after using the water continuously. However, even if the first draw sample does not reflect what you would see with continuous usage, it is still important because it can identify outlets that have elevated lead levels.

What are the results of the first draw testing?

| Gouverneur High School samples collected on May 13, 2021 | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Floor | Function/Space | Room | Fixture | Sample Results |
| 1 | Girls Locker Room (2nd sink) | locker room | sink | 172 ppb |
| 3 | Classroom | #352 | sink | 17 ppb |
| 1 | Girls Pool Locker Room (1st sink) | locker room | sink | 17 ppb |
| 1 | Boys Pool Locker Room (1st sink) | locker room | sink | 18 ppb |
| 1 | Classroom | #178 | sink | 29 ppb |
| 1 | Kitchen Kettle - Right | kitchen | kettle (sink) | 22 ppb |
| 1 | Classroom - 3rd sink | #125 | sink | 1210 ppb |
| 1 | Classroom - 2nd sink | #125 | sink | 50 ppb |
| 1 | Classroom - 1st sink | #125 | sink | 815 ppb |
| 1 | Classroom - 4th sink | #125 | sink | 5190 ppb |
| 1 | Classroom - 1st sink | #126 | sink | 16 ppb |
| 1 | Classroom - 3rd sink | #126 | sink | 70 ppb |
| 1 | Girls Bath near exit 10 - 1st sink | bathroom | sink | 6040 ppb |
| 1 | Girls Bath near exit 10 - 1st sink | bathroom | sink | 6650 ppb |

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What is being done in response to the results?

- Non-potable water signage has been placed at all outlets that tested with lead levels above the action level (15 ppb).
- The school will implement a systematic flushing program to implement routinely.
- Retesting of all outlets that tested above the action level (15ppb) will occur once school is back in session which will allow for the continuous usage of all outlets.
- The kitchen kettle will be retested prior to the opening of school.
- Outlets that tested below the action level will remain in service with no restrictions.

What are the health effects of lead?

Lead is a metal that can harm children and adults when it gets into their bodies. Lead is a known neurotoxin, particularly harmful to the developing brain and nervous system of children under 6 years old. Lead can harm a young child's growth, behavior, and ability to learn. Lead exposure during pregnancy may contribute to low birth weight and developmental delays in infants. There are many sources of lead exposure in the environment, and it is important to reduce all lead exposures as much as possible. Water testing helps identify and correct possible sources of lead that contribute to exposure from drinking water.

What are the other sources of lead exposure?

Lead is a metal that has been used for centuries for many purposes, resulting in widespread distribution in the environment. Major sources of lead exposure include lead-based paint in older housing, and lead that built up over decades in soil and dust due to historical use of lead in gasoline, paint, and manufacturing. Lead can also be found in several consumer products, including certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, foods, plumbing materials, and cosmetics. Lead seldom occurs naturally in water supplies but drinking water could become a possible source of lead exposure if the building's plumbing contains lead. The primary source of lead exposure for most children with elevated blood lead levels is lead based paint.

Should your child be tested for lead?

The risk to an individual child from past exposure to elevated lead in drinking water depends on many factors, including but not limited to, a child's age, weight, amount of water consumed, and the amount of lead in the water. Children may also be exposed to other significant sources of lead including paint, soil, and dust. Since blood lead testing is the only way to determine a child's blood lead level, parents should discuss their child's health history with their child's physician to determine if blood lead testing is appropriate. Pregnant women or women of childbearing age should also consider discussing this matter with their physician.

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Additional Resources:

For information about lead in school drinking water, go to:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/LeadTestinginSchoolDrinkingWater.html>

For information about NYS DOH Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, go to:

<http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/>

For more information on blood lead testing and ways to reduce your child's risk of exposure to lead, see "What Your Child's Blood Lead Test Means":

<http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2526/>