

FACT SHEET

Child Care Licensing Regulation

Community Care and Assisted Living Act

Lead in Drinking Water

Section 48 of the Child Care Licensing Regulation requires a licensee to ensure that safe drinking water is available to children.

Lead in drinking water is not a new issue; however recent testing in many communities has shown higher concentrations in tap water than previously expected.

What is Lead in drinking water? Lead was once a commonly used product in the plumbing system of buildings. Under certain conditions, lead particles from older plumbing systems can dissolve into drinking water.

Why do I need to be aware of lead in drinking water? Consuming even low amounts of lead may be harmful to brain development of infants and children. They are more vulnerable to negative effects of lead than adults. People may ingest lead from many sources, such as food, drinking water, soil, paint and dust. Caregivers should take steps to reduce children's exposure to lead from all sources, including drinking water.

How can I find out if my drinking water contains too much lead?

Older buildings are at higher risk of lead in drinking water because older plumbing rules allowed the use of lead in plumbing. The amount of lead released into the water depends on the plumbing materials used, the properties of the water, and how long the water sits in the plumbing. However, to know exactly what comes out of your tap, you need to do a water test. Drinking water experts (such as environmental health officers who work for health authorities) can direct you to information about whether your facility's water supply is at risk of having lead. Your local licensing officer can put you in touch with local health authority drinking water contacts for information, including how and when to test.



What can I do about lead in my drinking water? There are several things you can do to help reduce lead from drinking water. This includes: flushing pipes, using bottled water, adding filters or replacing lead plumbing.

To flush your pipes, let your cold water tap run for one to five minutes – or until the water turns colder. The amount of time required will depend on many factors, including the size and use of the building your facility is in. Larger buildings need to be flushed longer, particularly if the water has not been used for a long period (i.e., overnight.) Flushing should be done before drinking or cooking first thing in the morning or any other time the plumbing system has not been used for several hours.



Household water filters and treatment devices that are certified to remove lead from drinking water are also effective. For best results, install these filters and devices at the tap that is most commonly used for drinking water, such as the kitchen tap, and ensure they are maintained as per the manufacturer's instructions.

You can also address the problem permanently by removing or replacing any sources of lead plumbing pipes.

As lead from drinking water is not well absorbed by the skin, showering, bathing or cleaning is not a concern.

Note: Always use cold tap water for drinking or cooking as hot water increases the release of lead. Boiling the water will not remove lead.

Where can I get more information about water testing and treatment? If you would like more information or have specific questions about drinking water safety, please contact your local licensing officer who can put you in touch with your health authority drinking water experts.

BC Health Files: [Lead in Drinking Water](#)