

# Frequently Asked Questions – Water Sampling for Lead

## What is lead?

Lead is a metal found naturally in the environment. It has also been widely used over the years in gasoline, house paint and plumbing fixtures. The amount of lead that is released into the environment each year has been greatly reduced by restrictions on the use of leaded gas, starting in the mid-1970s. Laws forbidding the use of lead in house paint (1978) and lead in plumbing solder (1986) have helped as well.

## Why is lead a concern?

Lead can enter people's bodies in the food they eat, the air they breathe and the water they drink. Lead can be harmful to health and cause problems when it builds up in the body. Too much lead in the human body can cause damage to the brain, nervous system and red blood cells.

## What is the threshold level of lead in public drinking water supplies?

In July of 1991, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established an action level for lead in public drinking water at 15 micrograms per liter, which is the same as 15 parts per billion (ppb).

## Is there lead in bottled drinking water?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has established a maximum contaminant level of five micrograms per liter for lead in bottled drinking water. Bottled water suppliers must routinely test their water supply for lead.

## Who supplies water to Huntington UFSD?

Seven of eight Huntington schools are supplied by the Suffolk County Water Authority. Only Washington Primary School is supplied by the South Huntington Water District. Both suppliers actively test the water they supply to our buildings and community. Such tests reveal that our water supply does meet standards outlined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the New York State Department of Health.

## What can cause elevated lead levels?

In schools, the predominant source is fixtures within the buildings. All the samples collected were "first draw" samples, which means that the water tested was the first to come out of the tap after having been inactive at least overnight and in many cases, much longer. Sampling in this manner provides results that are likely to exhibit the highest concentrations of lead. (Note that even seconds of flushing often reduces levels considerably.) It is important to note all of our buildings are approximately 50 years old and predate the 1986 Safe Drinking Water Act. This law requires that only lead-free materials be used in all new plumbing and plumbing repairs.

## Are school districts required to test for lead in water?

Testing for lead is voluntary. In light of recent concerns nationwide, many districts have conducted tests recently.

## What if I have health concerns for my family?

Should you have any health concerns, you are encouraged to contact your family's physician. According to the NYS Department of Health, lead in drinking water is only one possible source of lead in the body. Since the most significant concern is for small children, a New York State regulation calls for universal screening of all children ages 1-2 for blood lead levels. It is important to identify an elevated level of lead in a child as early as possible to reduce or remove the source of

exposure, before any long-term health problems occur. Pregnant women should also discuss with their physicians the need for blood lead testing.

**Where can I get more information?**

For more information about lead and lead testing, visit the New York State Department of Health website ([www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)) or contact the Suffolk County Department of Health Services at (631) 852-5810.

REFERENCE: New York State Department of Health