



Lead Testing in Child Care Facilities

The harmful impact of lead exposure is well known and documented. There is no safe blood lead level for people. Lead is especially harmful to young children and pregnant women because of the impact on growth and brain development. Lead in water is most harmful to formula-fed infants. The most important step adults can take is to prevent lead exposure before it occurs.

In 2018, The [Early Learning Council](#) approved requirements for child care providers to prevent children in their care from being exposed to lead. All state-regulated child care providers must test for lead in their drinking water and send test results to the Office of Child Care. Additional rules require facilities to retest their water supplies every six years. If the test results come in at or higher than “15 parts per billion (ppb),” the provider must make changes to prevent lead exposure.

Applicable Rules

The Office of Child Care will work closely with child care providers to assure testing is occurring every six years, per Oregon Administrative Rule.

Who has to follow this new rule?

Certified Center (CC) providers: 414-300-0205(4)

Certified Family (CF) providers: 414-350-0165(4)

Registered Family (RF) providers: 414-205-0105(4)

Regulated Subsidy providers: Providers exempt from licensing who care for children receiving Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) subsidies.

Ongoing Testing

(a) After an operator conducts the initial testing under subsection (3) of this rule, the operator must test all drinking water faucets or fixtures at least once every six years from the date of the last test.

(b) All test results obtained in accordance with subsection (4)(a) of this rule must be submitted to OCC within 10 calendar days of the operator receiving the results from the laboratory. The test results must be accompanied by a floor plan or map of the facility that identifies the location of each drinking water faucet or fixture tested.

Requirements

Testing

Every six years, child care providers must:

1. Take a water sample from faucets or fixtures used for drinking or preparing food.
2. Submit the sample for lead testing using an accredited drinking water laboratory.
3. Send the results to the Office of Child Care.

Correcting

If the test results show a lead level that is at or higher than 15 parts per billion (ppb), the provider must:

1. Immediately prevent children from using or consuming the water by removing access to the faucet. The provider must supply bottled water for drinking, cooking, and preparing infant formula.
2. Within 60 days of receiving the results, submit a plan to the Office of Child Care to address the lead levels in the faucets or fixtures testing at or higher than 15 parts per billion. The plan must be consistent with the "[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 3T's for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools](#)" described in the following section.
3. Retest the water after making changes or continue to use bottled water only.

To reduce children's exposure to lead regardless of results, run faucets for 30 seconds to two minutes before using water for drinking, cooking, or preparing formula. Please note: boiling water does not remove lead.

What are the 3Ts?

The 3Ts is an [outreach program](#) launched by the Environmental Protection Agency in response to public concern over health risks posed by elevated lead levels in drinking water in schools and child care facilities across the country. The 3Ts are Training, Testing and Telling.

Training – focuses on alerting providers of the risks of lead poisoning and the ways to lessen those risks.

Testing – encourages providers to monitor lead levels in child care facility drinking water. The 3Ts tell how to collect samples and how to identify and respond to any existing problems.

Telling – emphasizes the need to communicate with parents and family members, and the public regarding testing protocol, reporting results, and remediation strategies taken.

Communications

Child care providers must notify parents and guardians of the test results within one business day of receiving the results and post them in a visible place in the facility or home.

Lead Testing for Young Children

A blood test is the only way to find out if a child has been exposed to lead. Signs of lead exposure or poisoning are not always easy to see. Many children who have lead poisoning look and act healthy. Because of this, lead poisoning may go unrecognized.

Children can get lead in their bodies by swallowing or breathing in dust that contains lead. Lead is a poison that affects every organ and system in the body. There is no function or need for lead. Very high levels of lead exposure can cause coma, seizures, and death. Even a little lead can make children slower learners. Exposure to lead can cause:

- Brain damage and lower intelligence
- Behavior and learning problems
- Impaired speech and language
- Slowed growth
- Kidney and liver damage
- Hearing damage

Ask Your Health Care Provider

To see if your child is at risk for lead poisoning, your health care provider will ask you some questions such as the ones from [OHA's Lead Poisoning Questionnaire](#). The only way to know for sure if your child has been exposed to lead is to have their blood tested. Blood tests are used to find out how much lead is in a child's blood.

Next Steps

Refer to your lead test certificate to confirm your last testing date. Allow approximately four to six weeks for the water sample results to be processed.

For more resources on lead exposure and prevention, visit oregonearlylearning.com/lead-poisoning-prevention.