

Department of Health
Health Protection Branch
P.O. Box 93
Saint John, NB
E2L 3X1

April 26, 2012

Dear Parent,

I am providing you with some information that I hope will be helpful when looking at the results of water testing that have been done in your child's school in District 8.

The Health Canada Maximum Acceptable Concentration (MAC) for lead in drinking water is 10 micrograms per litre of water. This guideline is designed to be protective for chronic, long term exposures – drinking water at or below this level over a lifetime. It assumes that people may also be exposed to small amounts of lead from other sources such as air, dust, and food. However, since lead does not have any practical use in the human body, it is reasonable to take measures to reduce exposure as much as possible.

When levels that are higher than Health Canada Guidelines are found in drinking water, the main advice is to find and remove the source of the problem. In the case of the schools, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will take immediate action to ensure that children not drink the water until the problem is fixed.

Occasionally drinking water containing lead at higher concentrations than the MAC over shorter time periods does not necessarily pose risk to your child's health. In the case of school district 8, the results obtained to date from school water testing are very unlikely to cause health problems in the majority of children. Schools that had levels just above the guideline on tier one testing (sample taken immediately after turning on water fountain) dropped significantly after 30 seconds of running the water. These findings reassure that little lead exposure was likely in that situation.

This kind of short-term low level exposure to lead is probably not going to cause symptoms nor require a visit to the doctor. Although blood testing can be done, the main "treatment" is to discover and remove the source of lead. In the case of the school water, such actions will have already been taken. Ongoing concerns about your child's health and development should be addressed the way they normally would. If your doctor feels that your child may have had other important lead exposures, he/she may decide to do further testing for that reason.

As far as copper in the water is concerned, copper is an essential element for humans it is necessary for many bodily functions. The only established MAC level in water is an aesthetic level of 1.0mg/l for taste. At the levels detected in District 8 it is unlikely to cause health issues.

Sincerely,



C. Scott Giffin, MD, MPH
Medical Officer of Health
South Region

Department of Health

Health Protection Branch

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