

## INFORMATION FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

### Responding to results of lead testing in Oregon school water systems

September 30, 2016

The Oregon State Board of Education recently adopted rules requiring all school districts to develop a plan to test drinking water systems for lead contamination. As a result, parents may be asking health care providers for information on risks of lead toxicity in their children.

In Oregon, the leading cause of childhood lead poisoning is exposure to lead-based paint, either through lead dust created by renovation work or deteriorating paint, both inside and outside older homes and buildings. Other sources of lead include:

- Hobbies, including working with stained glass, or making fishing weights or ammunition.
- Contaminated toys, jewelry or other consumer products (often from foreign sources).
- Traditional medicines and cosmetics (often from foreign sources).
- Occupational exposures, including building renovation. Note that children can also be exposed to lead on the work clothes of parents.
- Lead in diet, from contaminated foods or pottery with lead in the glaze.

The Oregon Health Authority, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program has developed a questionnaire for health care providers to use when evaluating the need to test a child for lead (see: [Lead Screening Questionnaire](#)). The questionnaire focuses on the leading causes of lead exposure in Oregon. In addition, if parents have specific concerns about their child's potential lead exposure at school (from water or paint), OHA recommends performing a blood test. Venous tests are preferred, however capillary tests (finger stick) can also be utilized. If a capillary test is  $\geq 5$  micrograms per deciliter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ), a confirmatory venous test should be taken. Children with blood lead levels  $\geq 5$   $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  receive follow-up (including possible environmental testing) by the local health department to determine the most likely source of lead exposure.

#### For more information

- The OHA Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program can be contacted at: [lead.program@state.or.us](mailto:lead.program@state.or.us) or 971-673-0440.
- OHA Lead Program website: [healthoregon.org/lead](http://healthoregon.org/lead)
- OHA information on school environmental health: [healthoregon.org/healthyschools](http://healthoregon.org/healthyschools)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov/lead](http://cdc.gov/lead)

#### Resources and recommendations for parents

- Most lead exposure happens in the home. Homes build before 1978 have a high potential to have lead-based paint. [Know how to identify lead-based paint hazards in the home.](#)
- If your home was built between 1970-1985, your pipes may have lead solder. [OHA's fact sheet on lead in drinking water.](#)
- A diet rich in calcium and iron can prevent the body from absorbing lead.
- [CD Summary](#) on childhood lead poisoning in Oregon.