



# Water Quality and Water Test Questions

UPDATED August 25, 2016

Portland Public Schools will update and maintain a list of frequently asked questions and answers regarding water quality in our schools. Questions can be submitted at [pubinfo@pps.net](mailto:pubinfo@pps.net).

---

## Health Impacts of Lead in Drinking Water

---

### Q. Where can I get information about health impacts from lead in drinking water?

A. The Multnomah County Health Department and the Oregon Health Authority are the agencies with the expertise in and responsibility for preventing and addressing health impacts from lead. The health department website <https://multco.us/health/lead-poisoning-prevention> provides excellent information and answers about lead information. They also have a hotline for questions 503.988.4000.

---

## Safe Water Distribution

---

### Q. What is the plan for water delivery during the 2016-17 school year?

A. PPS has installed 5 gallon water dispensers in central locations in each school. All drinking fountains have been turned off or covered, but water is on in bathrooms and sinks for hand washing.

### Q: Can families send bottled water with their students?

A. Yes, but PPS is encouraging parents to send reusable water bottles that can be filled from safe drinking water sources at school. Safe drinking water will be available at all schools for all students, faculty and school staff.

---

## Lead Level Screening

---

### Q. What opportunities did PPS provide for students and staff to get free lead screenings?

Last spring and throughout the summer, PPS partnered with Multnomah County and provided families information on the County's free lead level screenings throughout Portland.

Beginning on July 16, Portland Public Schools contracted with Kadalyst Health Partners to provide free lead screenings for students and staff at the district office. So far, 17 screenings have taken place.

PPS also contracted with ZRT Labs to provide home test kits for those unable to attend the clinics. Please call ZRT Labs at 503.466.2445 to request your kit. Home test kits are available for order until September 2, 2016.

### Q. Are there any additional opportunities for lead screening?

A. Yes. Additional screening clinics are scheduled for August 26 from 4:30 to 8:30pm and August 27 and 28 from 8:00 to 4:30pm at the Blanchard Education Service Center (BESC).

The screenings are free of charge to all staff and students. For any students and staff still interested in these screening opportunities, please go to [pps.kadalyst.com](http://pps.kadalyst.com) to sign up or call 503-916-3122. The last on-site screening opportunity will be August 28.

Additionally, blood lead testing is available for free through Multnomah County for children 6 and under and pregnant women. You can learn more about upcoming clinics by visiting <https://multco.us/health/lead-poisoning-prevention/test-your-child-lead>.

### Q. What are the results of the PPS and County Health blood level screenings?

A. As of August 24, 1,711 individuals had been screened at the Blanchard Education Service Center. Of those, 10 students and 9 adults received elevated capillary screening results at or above the current CDC public health action level of 5 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood for children or 10 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood for adults.



In compliance with best practices, those with initial reports of elevated levels were advised to consult with their primary care physician for a confirmatory blood test and further analysis and diagnosis. Confirmed elevated blood lead levels in children are subject to case management and environmental investigation by Multnomah County Environmental Health Services. Confirmed adult cases are handled by the Oregon Health Authority and/or Oregon OSHA depending on results.

In addition to the on-site screening clinics, PPS also contracted with ZRT Labs to provide home test kits for those unable to attend the clinics. As of August 24, the details of those tests, are below:

- 1,263 home kits were distributed
- 506 were processed
- 1 was at or above the CDC public health action levels.

In compliance with state rules and regulations both Kadalyst and ZRT will report all test results to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

**Q: Where can families learn more details about lead levels and health risks?**

**A.** Multnomah County operates a “lead line” email at [leadline@multco.us](mailto:leadline@multco.us) and a telephone information line at 503-988-4000.

---

**Other Questions**

---

**Q: How are school meals being prepared?**

**A.** Kitchen fixtures are a top priority for PPS. At this time, the Nutrition Services staff have been instructed not to serve food that requires water for preparation. Most of the water normally needed is used to wash produce. Due to the current situation, Nutrition Staff are not washing produce but purchasing pre-washed produce from the produce company or serving canned and frozen fruits and vegetables. PPS is working on a protocol to flush water lines so that we can resume normal, safe food preparation as quickly as possible.

**Q: Are Roosevelt, Franklin, Grant and Faubion getting new lead-free pipes as part of the Bond-funded renovations?**

**A.** Yes.

**Q: Can produce grown in school gardens (and watered with school water) be safely consumed?**

**A.** Last week Portland Public Schools issued guidance encouraging the community not to eat produce from school gardens. The guidance was based on the fact that many of our gardens have been irrigated with water testing above federal drinking water standards.

Here’s a joint statement from PPS and the Oregon Healthy Authority (OHA):

*Eating fresh produce from a garden is a healthy choice for people of all ages and their families. Recently, OHA looked at scientific research about the safety of gardening in soil that could contain lead. The amount of lead delivered to soil through water is quite small compared to the amount of lead already present at background levels in soil. Other potential sources, such as lead-based paint chips and dust, represent a much more significant contributor to soil lead concentrations. In general, garden plants do not absorb significant quantities of lead. However, it is important for people to wash vegetables and hands after gardening to reduce possible exposure to lead in soil, which is the major potential source of lead contamination on produce.*

We appreciate the guidance from OHA. As previously communicated, at this point we will not be serving food from school gardens because we are still evaluating fixtures used for food preparation. PPS will reinstitute the use of school garden produce in its kitchens and classrooms once its cold water fixtures are available to safely wash garden fruits and vegetables. We will provide thorough training to our nutrition services staff about proper washing at that time.



---

## Lead Testing Plan

---

### **Q. What is the status of PPS lead testing?**

**A.** The sampling of every cold water outlet in the district has been completed and all results of the initial “A” sampling have been posted individually online. We expect final, detailed reports from TRC for all buildings tested, including a full wrap up analysis, data and corrections to any errors in preliminary reporting. Once those reports are complete we will make them available to all PPS families and staff.

A second “B” sample was also taken and will be used to help identify the source of lead (pipes vs. fixtures). An independent third party will analyze both samples, and combined with other information, make recommendations for improvement to the current system likely including:

1. Replacement of water fixtures
2. Piping replacements
3. Updating protocols and procedures to ensure safe operations of all water fixtures such as flushing
4. Creation of a master water fixture database that tracks related maintenance history and any measurements

All drinking fountains have been covered or made inoperable, and there will be water dispensers available at every building for the start of school to ensure that all students and staff have safe drinking water. Protocols are being established to ensure that water used to prepare food in kitchens is safe. Pre-washed food will be used initially to accomplish this goal.

Signage will be placed on access doors to all non-fountain water sources (bathrooms, labs, classrooms, etc.) indicating that students and staff should not drink from sinks or any other fixture. Non-drinking uses such as hand-washing is safe.

### **Q. Have outdoor hose spigots and fountains been tested?**

**A.** Cold water faucets that are attached to a PPS building have been tested and results are included in the individual school results.

### **Q. Were charter schools tested as well?**

**A.** PPS tested the water in all its buildings. Charter schools co-located in PPS owned school buildings and facilities were tested for water quality this summer and results are posted. Charter schools not housed in a PPS building were not included, but charter school students were able to participate in the lead level screenings.