



**Department of
Education**

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**52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007**

February 12, 2020

Dear Families and Staff:

This is a follow up to a January letter informing you that your school's operational water fixtures would be tested for the presence of lead in 2020.

On **1/31/2020**, all operational sources of water at **Richmond Hill HS (Richmond Hill High School at 89-30 114 Street, Queens, NY 11418)**, including for drinking or cooking, were tested for the presence of lead. The laboratory results showed elevated levels of lead in **3 of the 97** fixtures from which water was taken and tested. Any drinking or cooking fixture with elevated levels was immediately taken offline, and will remain offline until it is successfully remediated. Details of elevated results are attached and complete test results are posted on the DOE website at <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/schools/Q475>. Click "Data and Reports" and look for the "Facilities" heading.

The test results include water fixtures that are not used for drinking or cooking, including handwashing sinks. Sinks will have clear signs indicating "Hand Washing Only" and "Not for Drinking Use." The custodial staff will flush the **Richmond Hill HS** water systems on Monday mornings and after holidays before school starts, in order to eliminate water that has been stagnant in pipes over the weekend. This is part of our robust protocol to ensure safe drinking water is available for students and staff.

Please visit <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/water-safety> to learn more about the protocol we use to ensure the safety of drinking water in each and every school.

We will keep you updated on the remediation work at **Richmond Hill HS**, and thank you for your patience and support.

Sincerely yours,

Kevin Moran



A NOTICE TO PARENTS, GUARDIANS, AND STAFF
Richmond Hill HS
Richmond Hill High School
89-30 114 Street, Queens, NY 11418
February 12, 2020

Safe and healthy school environments can foster healthy and successful children. To protect public health, the Public Health Law and New York State Health Department (NYSDOH) regulations require that all public schools and boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES) test lead levels in water from every outlet that is being used, or could potentially be used, for drinking or cooking. If lead is found at any water outlet at levels above 15 parts per billion (ppb), which is equal to 15 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$), the NYSDOH requires that the school take action to reduce the exposure to lead.

What is first draw testing of school drinking water for lead?

The “on-again, off-again” nature of water use at most schools can raise lead levels in school drinking water. Water that remains in pipes overnight, over a weekend, or over vacation periods stays in contact with lead pipes or lead solder and, as a result, could contain higher levels of lead. This is why schools are required to collect a sample after the water has been sitting in the plumbing system for a certain period of time. This “first draw” sample is likely to show higher levels of lead for that outlet than what you would see if you sampled after using the water continuously. However, even if the first draw sample does not reflect what you would see with continuous usage, it is still important because it can identify outlets that have elevated lead levels.

What are the initial first draw testing elevation results?

Samples Collected on 1/31/2020				
Floor	Function/ Space	Closest Room	Fixture Type	Sample Results (ppb)
BS	Adult Bathroom	Cafeteria	Cold Water Faucet	46.7
BS	Cafeteria	B01	Cold Water Faucet	23.4
BS	Hallway	b03	Bubbler	50.1

What is being done in response to the results?

Each of the affected drinking or cooking fixtures, have been taken out of service and will remain out of service until remediation work is completed and future testing provides results below the action level. Fixtures that are not used for drinking or cooking that tested with lead levels above the action level (15 ppb) will remain in service for hand washing only, with “Hand Washing Only” and “Not for Drinking Use” signs posted.

What are the health effects of lead?

Lead is a metal that can harm children and adults when it gets into their bodies. Lead is a known neurotoxin, particularly harmful to the developing brain and nervous system of children under 6 years old. Lead can harm a young child's growth, behavior, and ability to learn. Lead exposure during pregnancy may contribute to low birth weight and developmental delays in infants. There are many sources of lead



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exposure in the environment, and it is important to reduce all lead exposures as much as possible. Water testing helps identify and correct possible sources of lead that contribute to exposure from drinking water.

What are the other sources of lead exposure?

Lead is a metal that has been used for centuries for many purposes, resulting in widespread distribution in the environment. Major sources of lead exposure include lead-based paint in older housing, and lead that built up over decades in soil and dust due to historical use of lead in gasoline, paint, and manufacturing. Lead can also be found in a number of consumer products, including certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, foods, plumbing materials, and cosmetics. Lead seldom occurs naturally in water supplies but drinking water could become a possible source of lead exposure if the building's plumbing contains lead. The primary source of lead exposure for most children with elevated blood-lead levels is lead-based paint.

Should your child be tested for lead?

The risk to an individual child from past exposure to elevated lead in drinking water depends on many factors; for example, a child's age, weight, amount of water consumed, and the amount of lead in the water. Children may also be exposed to other significant sources of lead including paint, soil and dust. Since blood lead testing is the only way to determine a child's blood lead level, parents should discuss their child's health history with their child's physician to determine if blood lead testing is appropriate. Pregnant women or women of childbearing age should also consider discussing this matter with their physician.

Do elevated lead levels in school drinking water pose a serious risk to students and staff?

The risk to students and staff is low for many reasons. The elevated lead levels identified by the recent round of water testing are not likely to represent the levels seen throughout the day. The recent testing was conducted on water that had remained in pipes overnight. The lead concentration drops sharply after the first use of the day as stagnant water is cleared from the pipes and new, fresh water is brought in from the water main – which is virtually lead-free. In addition, for most students and staff, the amount of water consumed from a school water source during a school day is likely to be small when compared to total daily water consumption. Many of the elevated water samples came from fixtures that are not typically used for drinking, including bathrooms, slop sinks, and laboratories. Given all of these factors it is unlikely that these elevations represent conditions that would pose a health risk, however, if a person drinks sufficiently large quantities of water at those high levels over long periods of time, the risk increases. Nonetheless, if you are concerned about exposure to lead, talk to your doctor about having you or your child tested for lead poisoning.

Who is at risk for lead poisoning?

Children under 3 years of age are the most susceptible and vulnerable to the health effects of lead. Lead also poses a risk to the developing fetus. Exposure to lead may interfere with a child's growth and development.

What do we know about rates of lead poisoning in NYC children?

Rates of lead poisoning among NYC children have been falling. In 2018, 3,866 New York City children younger than 6 years of age were identified with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater. This



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represents an 7% decline from 2017 when there were 4,261 children with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater, and an 90% decline since 2005 when there were 37,344 children with blood lead levels of 5mcg/dL or greater.

Additional Resources

For more information regarding the testing program or sampling results go to:

<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/water-safety>

For information about lead in school drinking water, go to:

http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/water/drinking/lead/lead_testing_of_school_drinking_water.htm

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/LeadTestinginSchoolDrinkingWater.html>

For information about NYS Department of Health Lead Poisoning Prevention, go to:

<http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/>

For more information on blood lead testing and ways to reduce your child's risk of exposure to lead, see "What Your Child's Blood Lead Test Means":

<http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2526/> (available in ten languages).