

COVID-19: IMPROVING WATER QUALITY AT SCHOOLS AND WORKPLACES



One of the lesser discussed impacts of COVID-19 is the impact on point-of-use water quality within schools and office buildings. Since March 2020, many schools and workplaces have been left unoccupied, during which time water has remained stagnant in pipes and fixtures within the buildings. Stagnation is known to have a large impact on water quality; concentrations of heavy metals, such as lead and copper, have been

shown to increase after water has been sitting in pipes and the corrosion control treatment wears off. Another type of water treatment, chlorine, also wears off over time. This can allow bacteria, such as Legionella, to thrive.¹

What You Can Do

As schools and offices begin to reopen, **you can take action to improve water quality.** The CDC has recommended that shared water sources are not used to limit the spread of COVID-19.²

When these shared water sources do reopen, let both COLD and HOT water (if applicable) run for at least 30 minutes from sinks, water fountains, or anywhere used for cooking and drinking. Following this, replace cartridges of any previously installed filters that have been sitting unused for months. As a general rule, let the water run for 1-2 minutes every morning and for 6+ minutes when returning after the weekend. For best results, flush water sources whenever possible to improve water quality by decreasing the chances of contaminants.³

1

FOR TEACHERS:

- Ask administrators if main service lines have been flushed since shut-down
- Flush all sinks and water coolers
- Actively teach your students to flush the water sources before they drink
- Consider adding a faucet-mounted filter to your classroom sink

2

FOR PARENTS:

- Send your child to school with a refillable water bottle already full of filtered water (or with a filter inside the bottle)
- Ask your child's teacher if they are aware of flushing guidelines
- Teach your children to actively flush the water fountain or sink before filling up their bottle

3

FOR WORKING PROFESSIONALS:

- Bring your own refillable water bottle already full of filtered water (or with a filter inside the bottle)
- Ask your supervisor if their systems have been flushed since shut-down
- Actively flush all water sources before you consume

FLUSHING WATER



COOLERS

Use tape and a tennis ball to push down button to let cooler flush for 30 minutes.

Bonus: You can also use these tips in your home! Use an NSF 42 and 53 certified filter and flush any water has been sitting in pipes for more than 6 hours for 1-2 minutes before drinking or cooking.⁴

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¹ EPA. RESTORING WATER QUALITY IN BUILDINGS FOR REOPENING.

² CDC. Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation

³ Katner A, Pieper K, Brown K, et al. Effectiveness of Prevailing Flush Guidelines to Prevent Exposure to Lead in Tap Water.

⁴ CDC. Lead in Drinking Water