What kind of safeguards does Virginia have for making sure water in schools is safe?

- Since July of 2017, Virginia schools have been required to test water for lead, particularly those built before 1986, and make sure the water meets federal guidelines.

- Twenty-seven Virginia Beach schools in the most recent testing cycle came back with tests that were elevated to a degree that needed correction:
  
  - Bayside High School, Bayside Middle School, Brandon Middle School, Creeds Elementary School, Fairfield Elementary School, First Colonial High School, Green Run Elementary School, Holland Elementary School, Independence Middle School, Kempsville Middle School, King's Grant Elementary School, Kingston Elementary School, Laskin Road Annex, Lynnhaven Elementary School, Lynnhaven Middle School, Malibu Elementary School, North Landing Elementary School, Pembroke Elementary School, Plaza Middle School, Princess Anne Elementary School, Princess Anne High School, Princess Anne Middle School, Shelton Park Elementary School, Technical and Career Education Center, Thalia Elementary School, Trantwood Elementary School and Bettie F. Williams Elementary School.

- Virginia Beach schools report all affected areas have been addressed, and new tests show no sites in tested buildings have “actionable” lead levels.

Should I be concerned if my child attends these schools?

- According to the Virginia Beach Department of Public Health, the risk to an individual child from exposure to elevated lead in drinking water depends on many factors, including a child’s age, the amount of water consumed, and the amount of lead in the water.

- You should talk to your doctor or health care provider for more information about whether a blood test is necessary.

- The Virginia Department of Health does not recommend testing children for blood lead levels solely based on the current test results of school drinking water. In determining whether a child should be tested, it is important to factor into consideration the current potential exposure, past exposures, other potential exposures, and a clinical assessment.

- Evaluation of the current potential exposure includes the age and size of the child; the amount of time the child spends at school, including before or after school care or activities; the amount of water from the school that the child drinks in a typical day; and lead levels found in the school’s drinking water.

- Other potential exposures include child behaviors like the eating disorder of eating items that are not food, potential exposure to lead paint, occupations and hobbies of parents or caregivers, and exposure to non-paint sources, like pottery from other countries and bare soil in outdoor play areas.

- According to the Virginia Beach Department of Public Health, there have only been three cases of elevated blood levels reported in 2019, none of which were in school-aged children. Also, none were water related. Virginia Beach public schools have been advised by the Virginia Beach Department of Public Health and the University of Virginia’s Clinical Toxicology Program that, based upon reported water lead concentrations, the risk of elevated lead concentrations in children solely from school water consumption is very low.

- Doctors at CHKD have not identified lead contamination in our routine screening of younger children in the Virginia Beach area.

Do CHKD Medical Group pediatricians screen children for lead exposure?

- Yes, our CHKD Medical Group pediatricians follow American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations to assess all children when they are 1 and 2 years of age for lead exposure and test those at high risk. This is done through a blood test; the amount of lead measured in the blood can be used as a measure of the total amount in the body.

If I am concerned, can I ask my pediatrician to screen my child for lead?

- Yes. While pediatricians will screen for elevated blood lead levels at 1 and 2 years of age, there are circumstances that may require a lead level screening at other times. This is especially true if a new exposure to lead occurs and your child becomes at risk.
• If your child doesn’t have a regular doctor, you can find a CHKD Medical Group pediatrician by calling (757) 668-7000, or by clicking on the CHKD.org website.

• CHKD Medical Group pediatricians are trained to manage a wide range of lead levels in children. Children with significantly elevated lead levels that may require treatment may be referred to our CHKD lead clinic at the General Academic Pediatrics practice located at our main hospital. Treatment of high lead levels can range from changes in diet to medicines and hospital treatments.

What are the signs of lead poisoning?
• Poor appetite
• Vomiting
• Constipation
• Crankiness
• Loss of energy
• Sleeping problems
• Behavioral problems
• Learning problems

Who is at greatest risk of lead exposure?
• The greatest risk from lead is to infants, young children, and pregnant women. In children, lead also can lead to impaired mental and physical development, and hearing problems. Infants who drink formula prepared with lead-contaminated water may be at a higher risk because of the large amount of water they drink relative to their body size.

Why is lead a problem?
• Lead is a common metal that can be found around us in lead-based paint, air, soil, household dust, food, certain types of pottery, porcelain, pewter, and in tap water. High levels of lead in tap water can cause health effects if the lead in the water enters the blood and causes high blood lead level. It can cause damage to the brain and kidneys, and can interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of the body. It can slow growth and development, contribute to problems with learning, behavior, hearing and speech. It can lower IQ and decrease the ability to pay attention.
• Early intervention is key to reducing long-term effects.

How are children exposed to lead?
• The major sources of lead exposure among U.S. children are lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust found in deteriorating buildings.
• Lead-based paints were banned for use in housing in 1978. However, approximately 24 million housing units in the United States have deteriorated leaded paint and elevated levels of lead-contaminated house dust.

How can I protect my child from lead?
• To prevent lead poisoning, don’t let your child chew on anything covered with paint. If your home was built before 1978, contact a professional to have the paint tested for lead or to remove lead paint from your home. Also, have your home’s water tested for lead. Always let tap water run for a few moments before using it and cook with cold tap water only.
• Encourage your children to wash their hands before meals.
• Serve them foods rich in iron and calcium. This can limit the amount of lead absorbed. Good choices include eggs, lean red meat, beans, and dairy products.

Please note: CHKD Urgent Care Centers do not perform lead level testing.