

#FlintWaterCrisis Update

Pastor Monica at Salem Lutheran in Flint, MI provides some local updates

The National Guard have left the city after helping with water distribution and the handing out of filters door-to-door. These filters need to be replaced every three months. Who is going to help these families, especially the home-bound, elderly, and families with small children who don't have transportation, or access to replacement filters? Every water distribution site in Flint is well attended. The demand is high. The State has been rationing water to 1 case per family per day. How long do you think that case of water will last for a family of 4?

Many churches donated over 150 cases of water and 50 (5gallon) water jugs to Salem last week. I put the sign out "water here" and within 1 hour all of the water was distributed. I share with families that they can take as much as they can carry or as much as their family needs. The health department and State of Michigan are saying that it is safe to bathe children in the water as long as they do not consume it! (tell that to a 4 year old). The corrosive water is "hardened water" which is causing skin rashes and hair loss, among other things. We are also worried about the Legionella outbreaks. The CDC estimates that between 8,000-18,000 cases of Legionella occur in the US every year. Genesee County had 87 cases between 2014-2015, resulting in over 8 fatalities.

The corrosive water aged Flint's pipes by 10 years within 17 months. The State of Michigan estimates that it will take 15 years to replace the lead pipes in the city. To fix the problem, Flint needs new pipes. The government is hesitant to act on this need due to cost. The reality is, the people of Flint cannot survive on bottled water for years to come. There is uncertainty as to how well the faucet filters that were handed out by the State actually work. For example, one tap at Salem Lutheran revealed 47 ppb (parts per billion) of lead. 15ppb is the action line. Anything above 15 ppb demands immediate action. This tap is not the only tap that revealed elevated lead at the church. The World Health Organization has reported that the US national average for lead in drinking water is 2.8 ppb. So imagine how well a faucet filter designed to remove average contaminants will do with the elevated lead counts Flint is seeing. In addition, you cannot run hot water through the faucet filters. For hot water, the water must first be filtered and then heated; usually in a microwave or on a stove. Even though Flint has returned to the Detroit Water source, the biofilm in the Flint pipes has been so damaged, no matter what water source flows through Flint, lead is leaching into the water supply.

The on-going effects of lead poisoning on children is a significant concern in Flint, especially to parents and grandparents who will have to watch for signs of cognitive delay, attention deficit issues, health issues, and learning disabilities for years to come. Governor Snyder recently asked that Medicaid be expanded for all Flint children/youth under 21 years of age. We hope that is possible. The Flint Child Health & Development Fund, managed by the Community Foundation of Greater Flint has been set up to assist with the on-going needs of Flint children exposed to lead.

What does Flint still need?

- The removal of all lead pipes so that the water supply is safe again.
- Flint residents should not have to keep paying water bills for water that is not drinkable and has been contaminated for nearly two years. The average water bill for a Flint household is \$140 per/month.
- Clean/Safe drinking water. Despite reports, there is not enough water for 99,000 Flint residents to have access daily.

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Sign the Petition

Visit change.org and search for “Flint Water”

to find the petition titled:

“Stop Making Flint Residents Pay for
Poisoned Water!”

<http://tinyurl.com/Flint-change-org>

Share this petition with your network of friends on social media
and via e-mail!

Lead poisoning and health

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs379/en/>

World Health Organization Media centre Fact sheet N°379 Reviewed August 2015

Key facts

- Lead is a cumulative toxicant that affects multiple body systems and is particularly harmful to young children.
- Childhood lead exposure is estimated to contribute to about 600 000 new cases of children developing intellectual disabilities every year.
- Lead exposure is estimated to account for 143 000 deaths per year with the highest burden in developing regions.
- About one half of the burden of disease from lead occurs in the WHO South-East Asia Region, with about one-fifth each in the WHO Western Pacific and Eastern Mediterranean Regions.
- Lead in the body is distributed to the brain, liver, kidney and bones. It is stored in the teeth and bones, where it accumulates over time. Human exposure is usually assessed through the measurement of
 - lead in blood.
- There is no known level of lead exposure that is considered safe.
- Lead poisoning is entirely preventable.

Lead is a naturally occurring toxic metal found in the Earth's crust. Its widespread use has resulted in extensive environmental contamination, human exposure and significant public health problems in many parts of the world.

Important sources of environmental contamination include mining, smelting, manufacturing and recycling activities, and, in some countries, the continued use of leaded paint and leaded gasoline. More than three quarters of global lead consumption is for the manufacture of lead-acid batteries for motor vehicles. Lead is, however, also used in many other products, for example pigments, paints, solder, stained glass, crystal vessels, ammunition, ceramic glazes, jewellery, toys and in some cosmetics and traditional medicines. Drinking water delivered through lead pipes or pipes joined with lead solder may contain lead. Much of the lead in global commerce is now obtained from recycling.

Young children are particularly vulnerable to the toxic effects of lead and can suffer profound and permanent adverse

health effects, particularly affecting the development of the brain and nervous system. Lead also causes long-term harm in adults, including increased risk of high blood pressure and kidney damage. Exposure of pregnant women to high levels of lead can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight, as well as minor malformations.

Sources and routes of exposure

People can become exposed to lead through occupational and environmental sources. This mainly results from:

- inhalation of lead particles generated by burning materials containing lead, e.g. during smelting, informal recycling, stripping leaded paint and using leaded gasoline; and
- ingestion of lead-contaminated dust, water (from leaded pipes), food (from lead-glazed or lead-soldered containers).

The use of some traditional cosmetics and medicines can also result in lead exposure.

Young children are particularly vulnerable because they absorb 4–5 times as much ingested lead as adults from a given source. Moreover, children's innate curiosity and their age-appropriate hand-to-mouth behaviour result in their mouthing and swallowing lead-containing or lead-coated objects, such as contaminated soil or dust and flakes of decaying lead-containing paint. This route of exposure is magnified in children with pica (persistent and compulsive cravings to eat non-food items), who may, for example pick away at, and eat, leaded paint from walls, door frames and furniture. Exposure to lead-contaminated soil and dust resulting from battery recycling and mining has caused mass lead poisoning and multiple deaths in young children in Senegal and Nigeria.

Once lead enters the body, it is distributed to organs such as the brain, kidneys, liver and bones. The body stores lead in the teeth and bones where it accumulates over time. Lead stored in bone may be remobilized into the blood during pregnancy, thus exposing the fetus. Undernourished children are more susceptible to lead because their bodies absorb more lead if other nutrients, such as calcium, are

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lacking. Children at highest risk are the very young (including the developing fetus) and the impoverished.

Health effects of lead poisoning on children

Lead has had serious consequences for the health of children. At high levels of exposure, lead attacks the brain and central nervous system to cause coma, convulsions and even death. Children who survive severe lead poisoning may be left with mental retardation and behavioural disruption. At lower levels of exposure that cause no obvious symptoms, and that previously were considered safe, lead is now known to produce a spectrum of injury across multiple body systems. In particular lead affects children's brain development resulting in reduced intelligence quotient (IQ), behavioural changes such as shortening of attention span and increased antisocial behaviour, and reduced educational attainment. Lead exposure also causes anaemia, hypertension, renal impairment, immunotoxicity and toxicity to the reproductive organs. The neurological and behavioural effects of lead are believed to be irreversible.

There is no known safe blood lead concentration. But it is known that, as lead exposure increases, the range and severity of symptoms and effects also increases. Even blood lead concentrations as low as 5 µg/dl, once thought to be a "safe level", may result in decreased intelligence in children, behavioural difficulties and learning problems.

Encouragingly, the successful phasing out of leaded gasoline in most countries has resulted in a significant decline in population-level blood lead concentrations. There are now only six countries that continue to use leaded fuel.

WHO response

WHO has identified lead as one of ten chemicals of major public health concern, needing action by Member States to protect the health of workers, children and women of reproductive age. WHO has made available through its website a range of information on lead, including information for policy makers, technical guidance and advocacy materials.

WHO is currently developing guidelines on the prevention and management of lead poisoning, which will provide policy-makers, public health authorities and health professionals with evidence-based guidance on the measures that they can take to protect the health of children and adults from lead exposure.

Since leaded paint is a continuing source of exposure in many countries, WHO has joined with the United Nations Environment Programme to form the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint. This is a cooperative initiative to focus and catalyse efforts to achieve international goals to prevent children's exposure to lead from leaded paints and to minimize occupational exposures to such paint. Its broad objective is to promote a phase-out of the manufacture and sale of paints containing lead and eventually eliminate the risks that such paints pose.

The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint is an important means of contributing to the implementation of paragraph 57 of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and to resolution II/4B of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), which both concern the phasing of lead paint

Related links

[International lead poisoning prevention week of action](#)
[Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint](#)
[Ten chemicals of major public health concern](#)
[International Programme on Chemical Safety](#)
[Public health, environmental and social determinants of health \(PHE\)](#)