WATER PROGRAMS Sacramento State | Lead Testing in CHILD CARE CENTERS

# FILTER FACTS:

## Guidance for using filters to remove lead from drinking water at California licensed child care centers

### *What are the requirements for lead testing?*

For information on testing requirements, see the CDSS Provider Information Notice 21-21.1 CCP at: Written Directives Lead Testing

### *When should I use filters for lead reduction?*

If water testing results for lead at a fixture are above 5.5 ppb, you must replace the fixture before using it again. See replacement guidelines here: [Plumbing Guidance on Replacing Fixtures and Fittings]

You may also add a filter at this stage if you want. However, as filters can be costly over time, we recommend waiting until the new fixture has been tested to see if a filter is needed.

If the results for lead are above 5.5 ppb when the new fixture is tested, this is the best time to install a filter. A filter can help reduce lead levels to below 5.5 ppb.

### *What type of filter should I use?*

Select one that removes lead. Beware: "lead free" does not mean it removes lead. For example, the NSF 372 certifies there is no lead in the materials of the filter. But that isn't enough. The filter and replacement cartridge must also be certified for removal. Resource: [How to Identify Lead-Reducing Filters]

Larger cartridges tend to last longer. Under-sink filters typically last longer, but they filter all water, even water that is not consumed. They do not remove lead that can leach out of a faucet, so faucet replacement is still critical. Resource: [Filter Examples: Under Sink Point-of-Use]

Faucet-mounted filters can toggle off for non-consumptive use. These are good choices where use for drinking and food preparation is infrequent. Also, consider whether children should be supervised to ensure the filter is the proper position depending on use (e.g., active for drinks and inactive for hand washing). Resource: [Filter Examples: Over Sink Point-of-Use]

EPA Guidance on Selecting Filter Types: https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-09/custom_02_choosefilter2pg-508_0.pdf

### *When do I replace my filter cartridge?*

Replace as suggested by the manufacturer. This varies depending on how often the outlet is used. For a small cartridge at a high-use outlet, replacement could be required as often as weekly. Failure to replace the cartridge can result in consumption of unsafe levels of lead.

Don't forget! Set reminders on your work or phone calendar and record filter replacements on a tracking sheet that you keep with your water testing results.

Multiple cartridge types may fit your filter. Only select replacement cartridges that are certified for lead reduction.

### *When do I retest outlets with filters after I get a passing result?*

Every 5 years.

All outlets used for food preparation or drinking must be tested every 5 years, even if a filter is used and even if prior testing was below 5.5 ppb.

### *Contacts:*

***Free testing services and technical support:***
ab2370assistance@owp.csus.edu

CDSS Program Questions or Support: cccwatertesting@dss.ca.gov

General support: Tunisia Jackson, tmjackson@rrnetwork.org

### *Resources:*

Office of Water Programs

Lead Toxicity Prevention and Water Testing Information

*Funding for this project has been provided in full or in part through agreements with the State Water Resources Control Board and the California Department of Social Services. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the foregoing, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.*

California Rural Water Association | California Water Boards | CDSS | California Child Care Resource & Referral NETWORK

Updated 11/3/2026