

How to flush your Child Care Center after being inoperable (e.g., closed or inactive) for an extended period of time

Flushing ensures that you are using drinking and cooking water that has not been sitting stagnant in your pipes where it can accumulate bacteria, lead, copper, and other contaminants. When water is stagnant (not used) for an extended period (more than a long weekend), a thorough flush at maximum flow is recommended. This type of flushing replaces the stagnant water with fresh water, and also helps dislodge and remove lead-containing particles from the pipes inside the facility. Once removed, these particles are no longer a source of contamination.

To protect the health and safety of adults and children, we recommend following the steps below to flush your Child Care Center's plumbing prior to reopening and prior to sampling water for lead.

We encourage collecting the flushed water for watering plants, grass or the like to help conserve the water.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Identify all outlets (faucets, drinking fountains, etc.) at your facility.
2. Remove all aerators from water faucets. The aerators are screens or cartridges attached to the faucet outlets. Aerators should unscrew off the end of the faucet spout by hand. Use pliers to loosen if it does not come off easily.
3. Remove filters attached to the faucet spout. Under-the-counter filters can be left in place during flushing, but they should be replaced after flushing.
4. Turn on all cold-water outlets and let them run at the highest rate (valves wide open). Having all of the outlets running at the same time maximizes the flow through the service connection.
5. Let all outlets run together for 20 minutes.
6. After 20 minutes, turn off the water outlets in the same order they were turned on.
7. After all outlets are turned off, go to each outlet used for food preparation or drinking water and individually open the cold-water valve to allow maximum flow for 2 minutes. Flow will only occur in one outlet at a time to maximize the flow through the pipes serving each outlet.
8. Clean and reinstall aerators. A toothbrush can be used to remove buildup. If buildup is not coming off easily, you can soak it in vinegar for 5-10 minutes.
9. Replace filters that were attached to faucet spouts.
10. Service and replace under-the-counter filters according to the manufacturer's guidance.
11. Continue using each outlet for 2 minutes daily for approximately 2 weeks prior to reopening and/or sampling for water for lead.

Resources (please note some information in the resources below will not precisely match the above procedure):

General guidance documents:

<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/information-maintaining-or-restoring-water-quality-buildings-low-or-no-use>

Simple flushing description: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVvNXKvE8k4>

Detailed flushing procedure demonstration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ka4PgGehUEE>