

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention

What is childhood lead poisoning?

Studies show that no amount of lead exposure is safe for children. Lead is a metal that can harm children when it gets into their bodies. Lead can harm a young child's growth, behavior, and ability to learn. It can also cause anemia, kidney damage, and hearing loss. There are many sources of lead. Lead can be found in dust, air, water, soil, and in some products used in and around our homes.

Children younger than six years old are more likely to get lead poisoning than any other age group. Most often, children get lead poisoning from breathing in or swallowing dust from old lead paint. It can be found on floors and windowsills, hands, and toys. Lead can also be passed from pregnant person to baby during pregnancy.

Although lead poisoning is preventable, lead continues to be a major cause of poisoning among children. Thousands of children are still at risk. Learn more about what you can do to reduce the risks of lead poisoning to babies and young children.

When is lead tested? What do my child's lead test results mean?

At each well-child visit, your health care provider should assess children 6 months to 6 years of age for risk of high lead exposure. Your health care providers may use a questionnaire to determine if your child is at higher risk of lead poisoning. If so, they may need a lead test. They may also refer children at higher risk for a blood test. If you don't know where to bring your child for testing, you can also call your local health department.

A lead test uses a small amount of blood taken from a finger prick or a vein. Blood can be drawn at a doctor's office, a hospital, a clinic, or a lab. Children with lead test results greater than 5 micrograms per deciliter may require additional follow-up actions to address possible sources of lead exposures.

How to protect children

- Keep children away from peeling paint and broken plaster.
- Wash their hands after play, before meals, and before bed to rinse off any lead dust or dirt.
- Wash your child's toys often, especially teething toys. Learn more about product recalls including toys.
- Use cold water - not hot - for infant formula or cooking. Let the cold water tap run for at least a minute before using to flush lead picked up from pipes. Learn more about lead in drinking water.
- Store food from open cans in glass or plastic containers.
- Use lead-free dishes. Some dishes may have lead in their glazes. Don't use chipped or cracked dishes to store or serve food.
- Be careful with your hobbies. Some crafts call for use of paints, glazes and solder. Many of these may contain lead. Learn more about possible lead dangers while working on a hobby.
- Don't bring lead home with you from work. People who work at construction, plumbing, painting, auto repair and certain other jobs can be exposed to lead. Learn more about possible lead dangers while working on a construction site.
- Wash work clothes separately.
- Keep children away from remodeling and renovation sites. Old paint can have lead in it.
- Avoid having children play in soil especially around the foundations of older buildings and near roadways. Use a sandbox instead.
- When windows are open in warm weather, wash the sills and window wells any time you see dust, but at least once a month.

- Call your [local health department](#) for information about professionals who handle lead-based paint problems.
- If you are a renter, the [Residential Tenants' Rights Guide](#) can explain laws that can help you and provide resources to find more information about landlord and tenant issues, like lead.

Feed your family foods that get ahead of lead.

Foods high in iron, calcium and Vitamin C can help prevent lead poisoning:

- Iron – Protects from the harmful effects of lead
- Calcium – Makes it hard for lead to enter the body
- Vitamin C – Helps the body absorb iron and calcium better

Learn about [specific foods and tips](#).

What do health care providers do to manage and prevent lead poisoning?

[New York State Public Health Law and Regulations](#) require health care providers to:

- Obtain a blood lead test for all children at age 1 and again at age 2.
- Assess all children ages 6 months to 6 years for risk of lead exposure. This needs to be done at least annually as part of routine care. They may also get a blood lead test on all children found to be at risk.
- If a child has an elevated lead level, the health care provider must make certain the child has appropriate follow-up testing and medical management. Providers must also provide guidance on lead poisoning prevention and risk reduction.
- Provide anticipatory lead exposure prevention guidance to all parents of children under six years old, as part of routine care.

[Health care providers](#), please note as of October 1, 2019 guidelines for blood lead levels have changed.

What is New York State doing to end childhood lead poisoning?

Great progress has been made, but lead is still a threat to many children. The NYS DOH has strong programs, plans and laws working to prevent childhood lead poisoning statewide. These programs also help those children who have lead poisoning. Local health departments identify new cases, provide care coordination and environmental case management and in-home visits to help families reduce their environmental risks. The [Advisory Council on Lead Poisoning Prevention](#) provides guidance to the NYS DOH concerning development of these programs, plans, and laws.

Resources

- [Guidelines for Health Care Providers for the Prevention, Identification, and Management of Lead Exposure in Children \(Full Guidelines and Quick Reference Guide\)](#)
- [Does Your Child Need a Lead Test?](#)
- [What Your Child's Blood Lead Test Means](#)
- [Eat a Variety of Nutritious Foods to Help Reduce the Effects of Lead \(Poster\)](#)
- [Good Nutrition Helps: Reduce the Effects of Lead! \(Flyer\)](#)

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