



# What You Should Know About Exposure to Lead

## What is lead?

- Lead is a metal that is found in many places. You can't always see lead, even when it's present in high amounts in substances like paint, dust or dirt.

## What damage is done by lead?

- Lead in the body is not safe at any level. Even very small amounts of lead can permanently damage the brain as it develops. The only way to prevent damage from lead is to prevent exposure to lead.
- Lead makes it harder for a child to learn and causes behavior problems.
- Damage done by small amounts of lead may be hard to see. Most children who get lead in their body do not have any physical symptoms.

## Where is lead found?

- Children are often exposed to lead in their own homes and at places they visit.
- Lead was added to paint until 1978. Most older homes have paint that contains lead. In the United States, lead is in paint in:
  - 87 percent of homes built before 1940,
  - 69 percent of homes built from 1940 to 1959 and
  - 24 percent of homes built from 1960 to 1977.
- Lead gets into dust and dirt. Children eat lead by getting lead on their hands and then putting their hands in their mouth.
- High amounts of lead in dust occur when paint is chipping or peeling or when paint is disturbed during repairs.
- Lead is sometimes found in toy jewelry and other products.



## What can I do to protect my child?

- Learn if you have lead in your home. Before you sign a lease, ask the landlord about lead. Before you buy a home, have it inspected for lead.
  - If your home was built before 1978 or you don't know when it was built, assume it has lead.
- Painted surfaces should be kept in good repair. Do not disturb paint unless you and your family are protected from the dust that will occur during repairs. Repairs not done safely can make the problem worse. Learn how to protect your family before work begins by getting information from the sources below.
- Have your child's blood lead level checked.
  - A parent or guardian of a child between the ages of 6 months through 6 years of age, attending a licensed day care center, day care, home preschool, nursery school, kindergarten, or other child care facility, licensed or approved by the State, must provide a statement from a physician or health care provider that the child has been risk assessed or screened for lead as defined in Section 6.2 of 410ILCS. (410ILCS 45/7.1)
  - A blood lead test at 1 and 2 years of age is required for children who could be exposed to lead. Also, whenever new exposures to lead may have occurred, a blood lead test should be considered.

## For more information, please contact:

- Illinois Department of Public Health, phone 866-909-3572 or 217-782-3517 (for hearing impaired use only TTY 800-547-0466)
- Your local health department
- Access information on the Web at <http://sis.nlm.nih.gov/enviro/lead.html>

**Illinois Department of Public Health  
Guidelines for Blood Lead Screening and Lead Risk Assessment**

- **Blood lead screening** is defined as obtaining a blood lead test. **Lead risk assessment** is defined as evaluation of potential for exposures to lead based on questionnaire responses.
- **It is always appropriate to obtain a diagnostic blood lead test when a child is symptomatic or potential exposure to lead has been identified, regardless of child's age.**
- Federal mandates and the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services' (HFS) policy require that all children enrolled in HFS medical programs be considered at risk for lead poisoning and receive a screening blood lead test prior to age **12 months and 24 months**. Children older than the age of 24 months, up to 72 months of age, for whom no record of a previous screening blood lead test exists, also should receive a screening blood lead test. **All children enrolled in HFS medical programs are expected to receive a blood lead test regardless of where they live.** (Consult *Handbook for Providers of Healthy Kids Services*, Chapter HK-203.3.1, for more blood lead screening and reporting information.)
- Illinois has defined ZIP code areas at high risk and low risk for lead exposure based on housing age and poverty rates. Review the list of ZIP codes and determine status of ZIP codes in your area.

**Childhood Lead Risk Assessment Questionnaire**

- Complete the Childhood Lead Risk Assessment Questionnaire during a health care visit at ages 12 months and 24 months.
  - If responses to all the questions are "NO," re-evaluate at every well child visit or more often if deemed necessary.
  - If any response is "YES" or "DON'T KNOW," obtain a blood lead test.
- Consider evaluating children before 12 months of age, depending on the area.
- If the child is age 3 years to 6 years **and**
  - 1) there are any "YES" or "DON'T KNOW" answers **and**
  - 2) has had two successive blood lead test results that were each less than < 10 mcg/dL with one of these tests at age 2 years or older **and**
  - 3) risks of exposure to lead have not changed, **further blood lead tests are not necessary.**
- If the child is 3 years to 6 years of age, **and**
  - 1) all answers to the Childhood Lead Risk Assessment Questionnaire are "NO," **and**
  - 2) risks of exposure to lead have not changed, a blood lead test is not necessary.
- If the child is 3 years to 6 years of age and risks of exposures to lead have increased, obtain a blood lead test.
- Continue to use the Childhood Lead Risk Assessment Questionnaire through age 6.

**For children living in Chicago:**

- A blood lead test for children age 3 and younger should be obtained at 6, 12, 18, 24 and 36 months **OR** at 9, 15, 24 and 36 months.
- Children 4 years through 6 years of age with prior blood lead levels of <10 mcg/dL should have an annual risk assessment. A blood lead test should be performed if risk increases or if the child exhibits persistent oral behaviors.



## Childhood Lead Risk Assessment Questionnaire

**ALL CHILDREN 6 MONTHS THROUGH 6 YEARS OF AGE MUST BE ASSESSED FOR LEAD POISONING  
(410 ILCS 45/6.2)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP Code \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Respond to the following questions by circling the appropriate answer.</b>	<b>R E S P O N S E</b>
---	------------------------

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. Is this child eligible for or enrolled in Medicaid, Head Start, All Kids or WIC?   | Yes No Don't Know |
| 2. Does this child have a sibling with a blood lead level of 10 mcg/dL or higher?   | Yes No Don't Know |
| 3. Does this child live in or regularly visit a home built before 1978?   | Yes No Don't Know |
| 4. In the past year, has this child been exposed to repairs, repainting or renovation of a home built before 1978?  | Yes No Don't Know |
| 5. Is this child a refugee or an adoptee from any foreign country?  | Yes No Don't Know |
| 6. Has this child ever been to Mexico, Central or South America, Asian countries (i.e., China or India), or any country where exposure to lead from certain items could have occurred (for example, cosmetics, home remedies, folk medicines or glazed pottery)?  | Yes No Don't Know |
| 7. Does this child live with someone who has a job or a hobby that may involve lead (for example, jewelry making, building renovation or repair, bridge construction, plumbing, furniture refinishing, or work with automobile batteries or radiators, lead solder, leaded glass, lead shots, bullets or lead fishing sinkers)? | Yes No Don't Know |
| 8. At any time, has this child lived near a factory where lead is used (for example, a lead smelter or a paint factory)?  | Yes No Don't Know |
| 9. Does this child reside in a high-risk ZIP code area?   | Yes No Don't Know |

**A blood lead test should be performed on children:**

- with any "Yes" or "Don't Know" response
- living in a high-risk ZIP code area

All Medicaid-eligible children should have a blood lead test at 12 months of age and at 24 months of age. If a Medicaid-eligible child between 36 months and 72 months of age has not been previously tested, a blood lead test should be performed.

If there is any "Yes" or "Don't Know" response; **and**

- there has been no change in the child's living conditions; **and**
- the child has proof of two consecutive blood lead test results (documented below) that are each less than 10 mcg/dL (with one test at age 2 or older), a blood lead test is not needed at this time.

Test 1: Blood Lead Result \_\_\_\_\_ mcg/dL Date \_\_\_\_\_ Test 2: Blood Lead Result \_\_\_\_\_ mcg/dL Date \_\_\_\_\_

If responses to all the questions are "NO," re-evaluate at every well child visit or more often if deemed necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Doctor/Nurse

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Illinois Lead Program  
866-909-3572 or 217-782-3517  
TTY (hearing impaired use only) 800-547-0466

