

# Questions & Answers about Lead Poisoning



## What is lead?

Lead is a bluish-grey metal that occurs naturally in the environment. Although lead can be found in small amounts in the earth's crust, most of it comes from man-made activities such as manufacturing and mining. In the past, lead has been used in gasoline, paint, metals, bullets, and batteries. But because of lead's hazardous health effects, lead has been banned or significantly reduced in these products.

## What are the signs of lead poisoning?

Many children with lead poisoning have no signs at first, which means the poisoning is not diagnosed or treated early.

## What are the health effects of lead poisoning?

Lead replaces iron and calcium and affects many parts of the body, especially the nervous system. Lead is most harmful to children under the age of six, because a child's growing body takes up the lead easily. Problems related to lead poisoning can last the child's whole life.

## Is lead dangerous to a baby during pregnancy?

**YES!** Lead can be found in the blood and bones of pregnant women who have been exposed to lead. Miscarriage, stillbirth, early delivery and low birth weight can occur with lead poisoning. Lead can also be passed to a newborn baby through breast feeding.

### resources

- Prenatal Risk Assessment of Exposure
- Pregnancy, Lead, and Your Baby

## Should my child be tested for lead?

**YES!** All children on Medicaid must be tested at ages 1 and 2. All children living in **high-risk zip codes** must also be tested at ages 1 and 2. In addition, if you answered yes to any of the questions on the **Childhood Lead Risk Assessment Questionnaire**, your child should be tested. Lead can come from many places and all children should be tested at least once to make sure there is no lead in the child's body.

**!** In young children,  
the health effects of  
lead poisoning are:

### LOW LEAD LEVELS:

- Lower IQ
- Delayed growth
- Poor hearing
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorders (ADHD)

### HIGH LEAD LEVELS:

- Mental retardation
- Convulsions
- Coma and death



**lead is dangerous  
GET TESTED!**

## What is considered a safe level of lead in a child's blood?





There is no safe level of lead in a child's blood. However, blood lead levels greater than or equal to 5 micrograms are a concern. Lead levels as low as 5 have been shown to harm a child's ability to reason and be successful in school.

## What are the sources of lead poisoning?

Lead was used in house paint until 1978. Any house built before that year could have lead paint. Chips from this paint may be ingested or ground into dust, which may be eaten or breathed in. Children can be exposed in many ways but most exposure happens when a child puts things into their mouth when playing.

Lead can also be found in soil, water and certain items that come from other countries. Some items that have been recalled because they have lead are jewelry, candy, colored chalk and toys.

### resources

-  Centers for Disease Control (CDC):  
***How might I be exposed to lead?***
-  New York City Department of Health  
***Imported products that may contain lead***
-  ***Contaminated Herbal Medicine Products & Remedies***
-  New York State Department of Health  
***Aim at Lead Safety***

## What will happen if my child's blood test indicates an elevated lead level?

When a child's blood test shows an elevated lead level, several things may happen. The child's home will be checked by the public health lead program to find out where the poisoning is coming from. A case manager will provide education about stopping and preventing lead poisoning. A group of medical staff will make sure your child gets the proper care. It is important to continue to check your child's blood lead levels and that your home is free from lead.

## What happens next if my home has lead?

If there is lead in your home, an order to remove the lead is sent to the property owner. The owner must hire a worker who is licensed to get rid of lead in homes. You will get a letter and copy of the report with information on how to protect your child until the home is fixed. Your local health department, doctor, HealthChek coordinator, and other agencies may also be made aware of the findings. This information is also put into an Ohio Department of Health (ODH) database.

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## What should I do for my child who has lead poisoning?

If lead is found in your home, it is best to remove your children from the home until the lead is removed. If this can't be done right away, take these actions, which can help keep lead away from your children:

- ✓ Have your children wash their hands often
- ✓ Keep places where you eat in the house clean
- ✓ Keep floors, window sills, and other surfaces free from dust use wet cleaning methods
- ✓ Eat foods that are rich in calcium and iron

### resources

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

- 📄 *Lead and a Healthy Diet*
- 📄 *Lead in Your Home: A Parent's Reference Guide*
- 📄 *Ten Tips to Protect Children from Pesticide and Lead Poisonings around the Home*

Ohio Department of Health (ODH)

- 📄 *Keep Your Child Safe from Lead Poisoning*
- 📄 *Cleaning to Control Lead Dust*

## If you have questions or concerns about your child's lead levels, please contact:

Ohio Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program  
Ohio Department of Health  
246 North High Street, 6th Floor, FSS  
Columbus, OH 43215

Telephone: (614) 728-4115 or 1-877-LEAD-SAFE  
Fax: 614-728-6793  
Email: [kelly.harris@odh.ohio.gov](mailto:kelly.harris@odh.ohio.gov)

## Questions & Answers about Lead Poisoning

**Wash Your Hands Often!**



**Iron & Calcium Rich Foods!**  
lean red meats  
and seafood, beans,  
whole grains rice, pasta,  
broccoli, spinach, kale  
tofu.



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## Lead Testing Requirements and Medical Management Recommendations for Children Under the Age of Six Years

There is **no safe** level of lead in the blood. Any confirmed level of lead in the blood is a reliable indicator that the child has been exposed to lead. All blood lead test results, by law, are required to be reported to ODH by the analyzing laboratory.



### Lead Testing Requirements

YES\* NO

Is the child on Medicaid? if “yes” test at ages 1 and 2

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Does the child live in a High Risk ZIP Code?  
(visit <http://www.odh.ohio.gov>, word search “high risk zip codes”)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Ask the parent these five key questions to assess the child’s risk.

Does your child live in or regularly visit a house built before 1950? This includes a day care center, preschool, or home of a baby sitter or relative.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Does your child live in or visit a house that has peeling, chipping, dusting or chalking paint?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Does your child live in or visit a house built before 1978 with recent, ongoing, or planned renovation/remodeling?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Does your child have a sibling or playmate who has or did have lead poisoning?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Does your child frequently come in contact with an adult who has a hobby or works with lead? Examples are construction, welding, pottery, painting, and casting ammunition.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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If the family answers “yes” or “do not know” to any of the above questions,

**\* TEST FOR LEAD - It’s Ohio law.**

If the family answers “no,” provide prevention guidance and follow up at the next visit.