Lead Educational Fact Sheet for Parents and Guardians

What is Lead Poisoning?

Lead is a toxic metal used in a variety of products and materials. Lead poisoning is a condition caused by the ingestion or inhalation of lead that can cause many serious health impacts.

Who is Most at the Risk and Why?

Young children under the age of 6 are particularly vulnerable to lead because the physical and behavioral effects of lead occur at lower exposure levels as their developing bodies more readily absorb lead.

What is the Risk?

Lead is toxic to children and adults. A dose of lead that would have little effect on an adult can have a significant effect on a child. In children, low levels of exposure have been linked to the following health effects.

- Damage to the central and peripheral nervous system
- Behavior and learning problems
- Hyperactivity and lower IQ
- Slowed growth
- Impaired hearing
- Anemia

Common Sources of Lead Exposure Found in a Child's Environment

(Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

- Homes built before 1978 (when lead-based paints were banned) probably contain lead-based paint. When the paint peels and cracks, it makes lead dust. Children can be exposed to lead when they swallow or breathe in lead dust.
- Certain water pipes may contain lead.
- Lead can be found in some products such as toys and jewelry.
- Lead is sometimes in candies or traditional home remedies.
- Certain jobs and hobbies involve working with lead-based products, like stain glass work, and may cause parents to bring lead into the home.
- Children who live near airports may be exposed to lead in air and soil from aviation gas used in piston engine aircrafts.

Lead Blood Level Screenings

Even after lead exposure has stopped, lead will remain in the blood stream and slowly decrease over time. Blood screenings are an excellent method to determine the presence of lead in your child. This is done through a finger-stick (capillary) sample that is quick with results in a matter of minutes and is less invasive when compared to a traditional venous blood draw.

The State of Delaware is working with schools and health care partners to ensure free and accessible lead screening is available to families. There are two types of tests for the presence of elevated blood lead levels: Finger Sticks/Capillary Test (known as a lead screening) and Venous Tests (known as a blood test).

Public Health Clinics at State Service Centers
Capillary lead screenings (fingersticks) are available by appointment only for insured and uninsured of all ages at the following Public Health Clinic within State Service Centers.

- Hudson State Service Center, Public Health Clinic: 501 Ogletown Road, Newark DE 19711, 302-283-5757 ext. 3
- Porter State Service Center, Public Health Clinic: 509 W. 8th St., Wilmington DE 19801, 302-777-2860
- Williams State Service Center, Public Health Clinic: 805 River Rd., Dover DE 19901, 302-857-5140
- Milford State Service Center at the Riverwalk, Public Health Clinic: 253 NE Front St., Milford DE 19963, 302-424-7140
- Thurman Adams State Service Center, Public Health Clinic: 544 S. Bedford St., Georgetown DE 19947, 302-515-3174
- Anna C. Shipley State Service Center, Public Health Clinic: 350 Virginia Ave., Seaford DE 19973, 302-628-6772

Pediatrician/Primary Care Provider
Families can contact their pediatrician or primary care provider to discuss whether screening or testing is appropriate.

My child was screened for lead. Now what?
While there is no safe level of lead in children's blood, capillary screening results 3.5 µg/dL or higher are considered "elevated" and require further action.

Step 1. Confirmatory Test
Capillary screening results of 3.5 µg/dL or higher require a confirmatory venous (blood) test. Contact your child's primary care physician for this confirmatory blood testing for lead.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommended schedule for obtaining a confirmatory blood test is as follows and becomes more urgent with higher screening results:

3.5 to 9.9 µg/dL – testing within one to three months
10 to 44 µg/dL – testing within one week to one month
45 to 59 µg/dL – testing within 48 hours
60 to 69 µg/dL – testing within 24 hours
If the test confirms an elevated blood lead level, follow-up testing to track changes to the blood lead level may be necessary.

Risk Assessment

Below are several questions to assess the risk of lead exposure to your child. If you answer "Yes" to any of the following questions, there may be benefits to having your child screened. If you think that you or your child have been exposed to lead, you should seek guidance from a medical provider. The time it takes for an elevated lead level to decrease in the body depends on the person's weight, the amount and mode of lead exposure, as well as other factors.

In general, it takes repeated, ongoing exposure to create an elevated blood lead level.

1. Has your child lived in or visited a home, childcare or other building built before 1978?

   Yes No

2. Does your child eat or chew on non-food things like paint chips, jewelry, keys, window frames, or other metal or painted objects?

   Yes No

3. Does your child have a family member or friend who has or recently had an elevated blood lead level?

   Yes No

4. Has your child lived in or spent time in a foreign country in the past 12 months?

   Yes No

5. Does your child come in contact with an adult whose job or hobbies involve lead exposure? Examples include building repair/renovation, metal repair or recycling, metal welding, firearms, fishing, antique furniture refinishing, glass staining, or pottery making/glazing.

   Yes No

6. Does your family use products from other countries such as pottery, health remedies, spices, or food? Examples include traditional medicines such as Ayurvedic, greta, azarc6n, alkohl, bali, goli, coral, ghasard, liga, pay-loo-ah, and rueda. Other examples in this category include imported or glazed pottery, imported candy, spices such as turmeric, chili, paprika, and cumin from outside the U.S.

   Yes No

For more information, visit:

https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsp/lead.html

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