



# Childhood Lead Poisoning

## Understanding Your Child's Lead Screening

### What is childhood lead poisoning?

Childhood lead poisoning is a sickness caused by swallowing or breathing lead or lead dust. Lead poisoning can hurt a child's brain and nervous system and slow down growth and development. Children can have difficulty learning and behaving well and may have trouble paying attention. Even small amounts of lead can harm a child.

### What does my child's blood lead level mean?

The amount of lead in your child's blood, called a blood lead level, tells you if your child has been exposed to lead and if your child is lead poisoned.

<b>Test Result</b> in micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL)	<b>What You Should Do</b>
0-3.4 mcg/dL Blood level within acceptable limits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure your child is screened each year until the age of six.</li> </ul>
Greater than 3.5 mcg/dL using a finger stick/capillary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your child should be retested to confirm the blood lead level with a venous draw. (Finger sticks are a screening tool.)</li> </ul>
3.5 mcg/dL-4.9 mcg/dL using a venous draw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure your child gets another blood test in three months or less based upon doctor's recommendation.</li> <li>• Be aware that lead may be present in your home.</li> <li>• Visit <a href="http://health.ri.gov/lead">health.ri.gov/lead</a> for more information.</li> </ul>
5 mcg/dL-44 mcg/dL using a venous draw Blood level is high and requires action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure your child gets another blood test in three months or less.</li> <li>• Accept a lead educator's home visit and a free lead inspection from a licensed lead inspector. Please expect both to contact you.</li> <li>• Talk to your doctor about the next steps.</li> </ul>
Greater than 45 mcg/dL using a venous draw Your child needs treatment right away.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure your child gets a repeat blood test in 24 hours or less.</li> <li>• You will be offered the same services as levels of 5-44, but your child may have to be hospitalized for additional treatment.</li> </ul>



## Where does lead come from?

Most lead poisoning happens when children lick, swallow, or breathe in dust from lead paint. Most homes built before 1978 have lead paint, and it is usually under newer paint. If the old paint peels or cracks, dust and paint chips can fall onto floors and windowsills where it can get onto your child's hands and toys and into their mouths. Lead can also be found in the soil around your home, in tap water, in pottery, crystal, or ceramic dishes. Lead is in some children's jewelry, toys, keys, and old furniture. Exposure can happen if projects are completed using unsafe work practices in your home or neighborhood. Lead dust can be brought home by adults from workplaces or hobbies.

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## Protect your child

- Keep your child away from peeling and chipped paint and wash their hands frequently, especially before meals and before they go to bed.
- Use a wet mop to clean floors and use damp paper towels to clean windowsills.
- Let the water faucet run for one minute before using it if it hasn't been run for a few hours.
- Only use cold tap water for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula.
- Do not serve or store food in pewter, crystal, or cracked pottery.
- Serve foods that have calcium, iron, and vitamin C.
- Before making repairs in a home built before 1978, follow lead-safe work practices or hire a licensed professional. Visit:

<https://health.ri.gov/healthrisks/poisoning/lead/for/homeowners/>

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## What can I do if my child is lead poisoned?

For more information about lead poisoning and available resources, call the Health Information Line at **401-222-5960** or visit [www.health.ri.gov/lead](http://www.health.ri.gov/lead).

- Give your child healthy foods. Children younger than age five with high blood lead levels may qualify for additional benefits through the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. Visit <https://health.ri.gov/find/services/detail.php?id=44> or call the Health Information Line at **401-222-5960** to learn more.
- Lead poisoning in young children may lead to a developmental delay. If your child has an elevated lead level of 3.5 mcg/dL or higher, Early Intervention may be able to help you support your child's development. Early Intervention information can be found on the kids.ri.gov website, with this link: <https://eohhs.ri.gov/Consumer/FamilieswithChildren/EarlyIntervention.aspx> or call the Health Information Line at **401-222-5960** to learn more.
- Contact the RI Housing LeadSafe Homes Program. This program provides financial assistance to qualified homeowners/landlords to address lead hazards in homes across the state. Visit: [https://www.rihousing.com/leadsafe\\_homes/](https://www.rihousing.com/leadsafe_homes/) or call **401-450-1350** for more information.
- If you live in a rental property that is not owner-occupied, ask to see a Certificate of Lead Conformance required by law. All rental properties, even those that are owner-occupied, must be kept in a lead-safe condition. This means there should be no cracked, peeling, or chalking paint. [www.health.ri.gov/lead](http://www.health.ri.gov/lead)

### Your child should be screened for lead poisoning:

- Once by 15 months
- Twice by 36 months
- Then once a year, ages three to six



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