

Background: Childhood Lead Exposure and Poisoning

Lead is an element found throughout our environment, and it is highly toxic – especially to babies, toddlers and young children.

Effects on Children

Exposure to lead affects a child in many ways. Lead collects in the blood, tissues and bones, and can harm the kidneys, stunt growth and affect balance. Over the long term, children can experience developmental problems, learning difficulties, behavior disorders and a lower IQ.

Although there are not always early symptoms, exposure to lead can eventually cause symptoms such as abdominal pain, vomiting, constipation, change in appetite and irritability.

Typical Exposure Sources

Children become poisoned by lead from breathing lead contaminated dust or ingesting contaminated foods, liquids, or non-food items.

The primary source of lead exposure for children continues to be lead-based paint. Lead was banned as a paint additive in the U.S. in 1978, but thousands of older homes still pose a threat. As old lead paint flakes, chips, or turns to dust, it can contaminate surfaces in the home and exposed soil areas outdoors.

In addition to lead-based paint, other exposure sources may exist in the child's environment, for example, food contaminated by glazed pottery such as bean pots, water that may be contaminated from lead solder in old pipes, certain traditional home remedies, lead products used in hobbies such as stained glass making, even fishing weights. Bare soil near high-traffic areas may also be contaminated by automobile emissions deposited before leaded gasoline was banned.

If a parent works in an industry that exposes him or her to lead, it is important to change clothes before returning home, and to wash work clothes separately from other family laundry.

If a child's blood test reveals lead exposure, the immediate goal is to find and remove sources of exposure as quickly as possible.



We are your resource
for publications like these:

■ **Poster: Getting a Good Specimen**

Reviews techniques for getting good capillary and venous samples, with detailed photos of supplies currently shipped by the DSHS lab

■ **Educator's brochure: What All New Parents Need to Know...**

Provides background for provider staff who want to educate parents about lead poisoning

■ **Bilingual flyer series: How Lead Affects Your Child's Health**

A series of five flyers, bilingual (English/Spanish) front and back

■ **Brochure: Protect Your Children from Lead Poisoning**

A brochure available in either English or Spanish provides basic information to parents who may have limited reading skills

To learn more about our services,
contact your local health department's
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program:



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Your Local Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP)

Is Here to Help You



Keep Texas Children Safe From Lead



Local CLPPPs make a variety of services available to healthcare providers:

- patient screening and case management
- sources for general and clinical information
- current reporting requirements
- patient education resources and literature
- patient referral sources such as nutritional counseling
- family referrals such as Children's Health Insurance Program and Texas Health Steps
- monitoring of referrals
- presentations
- environmental investigations
- needs assessments
- prevention strategies

Lead poisoning is the primary environmental hazard faced by children in Texas.

- Lead poisoning is more likely to occur in children living in poverty.
- In 2003, census estimates placed 13.1 % of Texas families below the poverty level— over 711,000 Texas families are now living in poverty.
- The effects of chronic lead exposure in a young child may not show up until adolescence.



We provide the latest information on clinical techniques and guidelines:

- Washing a child's hands with **soap and water** before a capillary blood lead test will remove environmental lead contamination from the skin and help avoid an inaccurate result—an alcohol wipe will **not** do this.
- New lab certification guidelines are more stringent on tube fill levels. Refer to manufacturer's instructions for correct fill level.
- The number one reason specimens are rejected is incorrect fill volumes.



We publish information on childhood lead poisoning topics for your staff and your patients:

■ Exposure Sources

It's not always the paint!

We can provide information on sources of lead exposure including environmental and workplace contamination, dietary sources such as imported candies, and exposure from traditional home remedies.

■ Case Management

There aren't always symptoms!

We can provide resources such as questionnaires to help you screen families for risk factors and guidelines on current testing and reporting requirements. In addition we can refer you to medical specialists in the field of childhood lead poisoning treatment.

■ Prevention

It's entirely preventable!

We can help your staff educate parents and families about how childhood lead poisoning occurs, how to prevent it and where they can go for help.

How to comply with blood lead reporting laws:

Know the Law:

As of June 1, 2003, immediate reporting to the Texas Child Lead Registry is required for **all blood lead tests** for persons age 14 or younger.

Physicians, laboratories, hospitals, clinics and other healthcare facilities must report.

Provide Complete Data:

Complete data helps protect all the children of Texas. By tracking **all** childhood lead cases – using the data you provide – the state can better identify risk factors for all children as well as offer individual follow-up based on a child's test results.

Make sure your report includes:

- Child's complete name
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Race
- Address
- Blood lead result
- Type of blood sample (capillary or venous)
- Name and address of testing laboratory
- Test date



Report:

- By phone: (toll-free) 1 (800) 588-1248
- By fax: (512) 458-7699
- By mail:

**Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit
Department of State Health Services
PO Box 149347
Austin, Texas 78756**

If you need a reporting form call our toll free number: 1 (800) 588-1248, or download a form from our web site:

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/lead/providers.shtm>

Our website is your resource:

The Texas CLPPP website provides easy access to information about lead poisoning prevention, as well as reporting forms, requirements and guidelines, and links to other resources.

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/lead>