



Lead

Information for Parents

Updated 3/7/19

What is lead?

- Lead is a metal found in nature. It can be found in all parts of our environment – the soil, the water, and even inside our homes.
- Lead is a poison when it gets into the body, and it can stay in the body for a long time.
- Lead is especially bad for the health of babies and young children. Their bodies absorb lead more easily than the bodies of adults.

What is lead poisoning?

Lead poisoning is when lead builds up in the body, usually over months or years.

Exposure to lead can:

- Hurt the brain, kidneys, and nervous system
- Slow growth and development
- Make it harder for the child to learn
- Damage hearing and speech
- Cause behavior problems



Regular testing and early detection can prevent long-term harm from lead exposure.

How do children get lead poisoning?

Lead Paint

Most children get lead poisoning from lead paint.

Lead paint is often found in both the inside and outside of homes built before 1978.

Lead paint chips and dust come from:

- old paint that is peeling and cracking
- opening and closing old windows
- home repairs and renovations

Children may swallow or eat lead paint dust and paint chips.

Household Items

Some toys, toy jewelry, pottery, and home remedies may contain lead. This is more rare today than in the past. Visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission's website at www.cpsc.gov.

Water

Lead can enter water:

- when pipes corrode
- if there is a lead service line



How do I know if my home has lead in it?

- Get your home inspected for lead paint. Request a home inspection from a Boston Public Health Commission lead inspector by calling 617-534-5965.
- Learn whether your home's service line is made from lead. Check the Boston Water and Sewer Commission's lead service line map at www.bwsc.org or call 617-989-7888.



How do I know if my child has been exposed to lead?

- The only way to know whether your child has been exposed to lead is through a blood test called a *blood lead level*. It measures how much lead is in your child's blood.
- There is no safe amount of lead in the body.
- The MA Lead Law requires that your child be tested every year until age 3, and before they enter pre-K, daycare, and kindergarten. *We recommend annual testing until age 6.*

If your child's blood lead level is between 5-9 ug/dL

- Your child has a blood lead level of concern.
- Your child should get a blood test again within 2 months after their first test.
- Your child's doctor may prescribe vitamins and a special diet.
- Consider requesting a home inspection from a Boston Public Health Commission lead inspector and community health worker.

If your child's blood lead level is 10 ug/dL or higher

- Your child has lead poisoning.
- A lead inspection of your home is required. A Boston Public Health Commission lead inspector and community health worker will contact you to schedule an inspection.
- Your child should be seen by a doctor.
- Ask your child's doctor about learning problems your child may have.

What can I do to prevent lead poisoning?

- Ask your child's doctor for a blood lead level test every year until your child is 6 years old.
- Feed your child a healthy diet, including foods that contain calcium, vitamin C, & iron.
- Remove shoes before entering your home.
- Wash your child's hands frequently.
- Keep your child's fingernails short.
- Get your home inspected for lead paint.
- Require that any contractors doing work on your house are certified lead-safe contractors.
- Find out if any of your child's toys have been recalled.
- Find out if your home's water service line is made from lead.