

FAQ's about Child Blood Testing and Risk Factors

How is my child exposed to lead?

The most common source of children's exposure to lead is contaminated dust from older homes that contain lead-based paint. Children get the dust on their hands and toys through normal hand-to-mouth activity. Children can also be exposed to lead by eating paint chips that contain lead or by playing in lead-contaminated dirt.

Other sources of lead exposure include home health/ folk remedies (azarcon and greta), cosmetics (kohl or surma), workplace (recycling or making automobile batteries), and hobbies (making stained-glass windows), home renovation, old ceramic or pewter cookware and old urns/kettles.

Why is it that only children 6 years old or younger get tested for the possibility of lead poison, even though my child maybe greater than 6 years old and has lived in a pre-1978 home?

Data reflects that children under the age of 6 are at the greatest risks for lead poisoning. This is in part because at that age a child is beginning to develop their central nervous system and at the same time experiences a lot of hand to mouth activity.

What are the signs & symptoms of lead poisoning in children?

While not all children who have lead poisoning may look, feel or act "sick," children with an elevated blood lead level may have the following signs and symptoms:

- Be tired or cranky
- Have a poor appetite
- Not able to pay attention
- Have headaches
- Nausea/Vomiting

- Be constipated
- Unable to sleep
- Clumsy
- Weak
- Learning, developmental, and behavioral problems

At what age should initial testing be done?

The American Academy of Pediatrics and CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends all children have at least one measurement of blood lead beginning at age 12 months, with a retest at age 24 months, if possible.

How often should my child be tested?

If a child is at risk for lead exposure, they should be tested yearly. If a child has an elevated blood level then they should be tested every 3 months.

Where can I take my child to get tested?

Contact your child's primary care physician's office.

When my child goes to a well child check-up will the doctor automatically screen for lead poison?

No, but if there are concerns of lead exposure, please consult with your child's primary care physician for testing.

All children enrolled in Medicaid must be screened at ages 12 and 24 months or at ages 36 to 72 months if they have not previously been screened.