

# Lead-Safe Texas

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**Blood Lead Surveillance Branch**  
Texas Department of State Health Services  
[dshs.texas.gov/lead](https://dshs.texas.gov/lead)

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**With the support of communities throughout Texas, regional public health offices, and Texas healthcare workers, BLSB is working diligently toward a safer, healthier Texas.**

## About this Newsletter

This newsletter provides information on lead poisoning prevention. You will find all newsletters on our website at [dshs.texas.gov/lead](https://dshs.texas.gov/lead).

## About the Blood Lead Surveillance Branch

The Texas Department of State Health Services Blood Lead Surveillance Branch (BLSB) maintains a system of blood lead test results for children and adults. Our goal is to eliminate lead as a public health problem in Texas. We work toward this by working with health, housing, and environmental organizations. With the support of communities, regional public health offices, and Texas healthcare workers, BLSB is working diligently toward a safer, healthier Texas.

## What is Lead?

Lead is a highly toxic metal. In the past, lead caused extensive environmental contamination and health problems in many parts of the world. In 1978, the federal government banned consumer uses of lead-containing paint to reduce the amount of lead in the environment.

If a home was built before 1978, there may be a chance it contains lead-based paint. Lead can also come from the soil, drinking water, amulets, pottery, cosmetics, and even toys.

## Testing: Every Child Counts

Childhood lead exposure remains a public health concern. There is no safe level of lead exposure, but lead exposure is preventable. We know your practice is busy. But as a primary care provider, you play a vital role in testing and reporting blood lead levels. Your efforts as a lead prevention ally can change the lives of your patients, their family, and your community.

So what can you do? Texas Health Steps (THS) and The Texas Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (TXCLPPP) suggest these best practices:

- Test your THS pediatric patients at their 12 and 24-month check-ups.
- Test any THS child age 13 months through 5 years if you're not sure of their blood lead test status.
- Test children who are not enrolled in Medicaid – Use the TXCLPPP's [Texas Childhood Blood Lead Screening Guidelines](#) to assess their risk.
- Report all blood lead tests.
- Follow-up and check children with elevated blood lead levels.
- Provide lead prevention education to all parents of children under the age of 6.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [recommends follow-up action](#) on children with elevated blood lead levels  $\geq 5 \mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ . The cost of lead poisoning is lower IQ scores, behavioral issues, and problems with language, learning, attention. Since 1996, [Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 88](#) requires the reporting of all childhood BLLs (elevated and non-elevated) to DSHS by providers and laboratories.

Every blood lead test helps toward eliminating childhood lead poisoning. By increasing testing in children under age 6, we can:

- Improve identification of lead sources before children are exposed
- Identify high-risk areas and populations
- Refer lead-exposed children for vital services
- Expand targeted, population-based interventions

**“Every blood lead test helps towards eliminating childhood lead poisoning.”**



## Don't Let Prevention Take a Back Seat

As a Texas provider, you and your staff are responsible for delivering the best care for your patients, educating parents, and following best practices. Trying to do all three is no easy feat!

BLSB aims to make lead testing, reporting and education simple and easy to follow for providers and their staff. BLSB encourages all providers and staff to check the [BLSB website](#) for the most up-to-date information on testing, reporting, and educational materials.

For Texas Health Steps (THSteps) providers, THSteps provides [online provider education courses](#). THSteps strongly encourages THSteps providers to take these courses and have their clinical staff also take the courses for training purposes.

THSteps courses which touch on THSteps checkups and lead screenings include:

- [THSteps Overview](#)
- [Preventing Lead Exposure](#)
- [Texas Health Steps Provider's Guide to the Periodicity Schedule](#)
- [How to Conduct Texas Health Steps Medical Checkups](#)
- [Specimen Collection](#)

## Reporting: An Rx for Success

Lead is a reportable health condition in Texas. The [Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\)](#) requires providers to report all (elevated and low) blood lead levels. BLSB collects all reports and manages them in the Texas Lead Registry.

Reporting your patient's blood lead test result plays a key role in their health. By reporting their blood lead test result, BLSB can make sure:

- Parents/guardians receive information on lead poisoning and prevention
- Environmental Lead Investigations (ELIs) are scheduled sooner
- Children are treated quicker
- Children can access educational or disability services on time

Reporting benefits Texas, too. As a provider, you are on the front lines of public health and the communities BLSB serves. We rely on you to report so we can improve our services to your community.

BLSB recommends providers and staff report electronically with the [BLSB Electronic Reporting Website](#). BLSB and the University of Texas Dell Medical School have partnered to make this sign-up easier with a [step-by-step video](#) on how to register and enter results. If electronic reporting isn't possible, contact BLSB for other reporting options.

**Children should be tested for lead at:**



**12 months**



**24 months**



**Up until 6 years old, if no prior lead test was done**

**Children should be tested if they live in a targeted zip code**



**“Reporting benefits Texas, too... We rely on *you* to report so we can improve our services to your community.”**

## Complete Report, Complete Peace of Mind

We ask all providers and staff to fill out reporting forms completely. A complete electronic or paper report form is great for you, the patient, and BLSB. Incomplete forms can delay case coordination. It can also affect how soon a child gets treated. Missing data mean calls to provider offices for missing information or re-submission of the report. A successful submission of a report includes all sections filled in, including the patient's address, gender, race, and ethnicity.

## Making Sure Your Practice is Covered: Filing for Reimbursement

Testing for lead and reporting results makes sure children are given the best medical care. The returns on lead testing for children are many. The financial return for you and your practice is also important. To make sure you're getting compensated, there are things you can do.

### If you are a Texas Health Steps (THSteps) Provider:

Lead testing is a required component for the 12- and 24-month visit. Reimbursement for a lead screening is bundled into the cost of a 12- and 24-month visit. When you submit your claim with THSteps, you'll be reimbursed the services you provided, including the lead screening.

- If you used a point-of-care lead test, you can file a separate reimbursement claim.
- If you sent a fingerstick or venous specimen to the DSHS Laboratory, you cannot file a separate reimbursement claim. The DSHS Laboratory provides free testing for THSteps providers. Specimen collection materials are provided at no additional cost.
- If you do not complete required components of a THSteps visit or fail to document it in a child's medical record, you may be at risk of reimbursement denial or recoupment.
- For more information on reimbursement and best practices, visit the [THS Medicaid Resource Center](#).

### If you are not a THSteps provider, but are part of a Medicaid Managed Care Organization (MCO):

- Refer to your MCO about their reimbursement rates and procedures. For the most up-to-date information, refer to your MCO's website or speak to a representative.

### If you are a provider who does not see Medicaid-enrolled children:

- Contact the insurance company covering the child for reimbursement and procedures. Each insurance company does things differently.



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

**Texas Department of State  
Health Services**

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