

# Lead-Safe Texas

Summer 2023

Volume 5 | Issue 1

## Blood Lead Surveillance Branch (BLSB)

Texas Department of State Health Services

[dshs.texas.gov/lead](https://dshs.texas.gov/lead)

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

About this Newsletter	1
New Blood Lead Reference Value	2
Learn the Signs and Act Early	3
Reporting: Quality Over Quantity	4
Reporting Electronically to BLSB	4

With the support of communities throughout Texas, regional public health offices, and Texas health care workers, BLSB is working diligently toward a safer and 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/newsletters](https://dshs.texas.gov/lead/newsletters).

## About the Blood Lead Surveillance Branch

The Texas Department of State Health Services Blood Lead Surveillance Branch (BLSB) maintains a surveillance system of blood lead test results for children and adults. Our goal is to end lead poisoning as a public health problem in Texas. We do this by working with health, housing, and environmental organizations. Along with local communities, BLSB is working 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 U.S. federal government banned the sale of lead-containing paint for consumer use to reduce the amount of lead in the environment.

A home built before 1978 has a higher chance of containing lead-based paint. Lead can also be in soil, drinking water, amulets, pottery, cosmetics, and even toys.

## New Blood Lead Reference Value

On October 28, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced an update to the [Blood Lead Reference Value \(BLRV\)](#) from 5.0 micrograms per deciliter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ) to 3.5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  in children.

As of January 1, 2023, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has implemented an updated BLRV of 3.5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ , per CDC recommendation. The BLRV is used as a screening tool to identify children with higher levels of lead in their blood compared to most children, though no lead level is safe. It is based on the blood lead level distribution in U.S. children ages 1 to 5. The BLRV is a guide that helps:

- Determine follow-up actions to reduce high lead levels
- Prioritizes communities with the most need for primary prevention of lead exposure



BLSB has updated the [Reference for Blood Lead Retesting and Medical Case Management, Pb-109](#) form to reflect CDC guidance.

## Learn the Signs and Act Early

A child's body rapidly grows and develops during the first five years of life. During this period, it is important to protect children from potential contaminants, such as lead. Early exposure can harm a child's brain, growth, and learning capabilities.



The effects of lead poisoning are irreversible. Lead poisoning prevention can start before the child is born. Texas providers and staff are responsible for delivering the best care to patients, educating parents, and following best practices.

Providers can help with lead poisoning prevention by:

- Using screening questions, outreach, and education to minimize lead exposure.
- Emphasizing a healthy diet to reduce lead absorption.
- Testing blood lead levels to identify exposed children.
- Continuing to monitor blood lead levels in exposed children.
- Coordinating efforts with parents, local, and state health departments to minimize risks to individual children.
- Assisting communities in their primary prevention efforts.

## Fight Lead Poisoning with a Healthy Diet

Providing plenty of Vitamin C, calcium, and iron can decrease lead absorption in children.

### Sources of Vitamin C

- Citrus fruits
- Strawberries
- Kiwi
- Tomatoes
- Green and red bell peppers

### Sources of Calcium

- Canned salmon and sardines
- Milk
- Yogurt
- Cheese
- Green leafy vegetables

### Sources of Iron

- Legumes
- Fish
- Dried fruits
- Lean red meats

## Sources of Lead Exposure

Creating a lead-safe environment is key to protect children from lead poisoning. Parents should be aware of the most common sources of lead and be provided with the tools to remove them. The most common causes for lead poisoning may include:

- **Paint** - Lead dust is created when paint chips or peels. It can be inhaled or swallowed by children. Although lead-based paints are banned, they can still be found in homes built before 1978.
- **Drinking Water** – Household plumbing fixtures, such as pipes and faucets, may contain lead. It can enter a home's water supply and expose children to lead poisoning if consumed.
- **Soil** – Lead deposits, exterior lead-based paint, or gasoline may contaminate soil. This can cause lead poisoning when children either swallow or breathe in the dirt.
- **Foods** - Certain imported spices and powders can contain lead. It may be introduced if the drying, storing, and grinding of the ingredients is done improperly.
- **Consumer Products** - Lead can be found in the paint or pigment of imported toys and jewelry. For more information on recalls of jewelry and toys, visit the [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) website.
- **Jobs, Hobbies, and Other Activities** – Certain jobs and hobbies are at a higher risk of lead exposures. Lead dust from these activities may be tracked onto surfaces that a child may encounter.





## Reporting: Quality Over Quantity

It's important to provide all required information when submitting blood lead test results. Reports help BLSB make lead testing, reporting, treatment, and education simple and easy.

The [Texas Administrative code](#) requires the following information in every blood lead result reporting to BLSB:

- The child's name, address, date of birth, sex, race, and ethnicity
- The child's blood lead level concentration, test date, and name and telephone number of the testing laboratory
- Whether the sample was capillary or venous
- The name and city of the attending physician

## Reporting Electronically to BLSB

Healthcare providers are required to report to BLSB. Make reporting easy by using one of these methods:

- Complete the Electronic Reporting Sign-Up Form on the [Texas DSHS Website](#). Once you submit your information, someone from DSHS will contact you with instructions on how to upload the results to a secure FTP server.
- Access the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS) on the [DSHS website](#).
- If using Lead Care II, download software to report on the [Magellan website](#).



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

**Texas Department of State  
Health Services**

### Blood Lead Surveillance Branch

Texas Department of State Health Services

[dshs.texas.gov/lead](https://dshs.texas.gov/lead)

1-800-588-1248

TexasBloodLead@dshs.texas.gov

For more information on reporting, visit the  
**DSHS Website.**