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Lead-Safe Texas

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About this Newsletter

This semi-annual newsletter provides information on lead poisoning prevention news and updates. All newsletters are available on our website at [DSHS.texas.gov/lead](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/lead).

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. **BLSB's** goal is to eliminate lead as a public health problem in Texas by working with health, housing, and environmental organizations. With the support of communities throughout Texas, 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 whose widespread commercial use has 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.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a reference level of 5 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL) or greater identifies children with elevated blood lead levels. This means that these children have been exposed to more lead than most children.



Did You Know...

Texas law requires reporting of **ALL** blood lead test results (both elevated and non-elevated) regardless of age. Not reporting complete information causes a delay in follow-up services for a person with an elevated blood lead level. [Click here](#) to learn how to report blood lead levels in Texas.

What Should Healthcare Providers Know About Lead?

A child's healthcare provider plays a key role in preventing, identifying, and treating lead poisoning in patients and advocating for public health measures to address the problem. The healthcare provider's role is to:

- **Educate:** Provide anticipatory guidance about common sources of environmental lead exposure: paint in homes or child care facilities built prior to 1978; soil near roadways; take-home exposures related to adult occupations; and imported spices, cosmetics, folk remedies, and cookware.
- **Screen:** Screen children at 12 and 24 months if they are enrolled in Medicaid/Texas Health Steps or reside in a targeted area. Refer to the *Childhood Blood Lead Screening Guidelines* (form PB-120) to determine when screening is necessary. Screening should be done by a venous or capillary blood lead test.
- **Follow-up:** Use the *Reference for Follow-up Testing and Medical Case Management* (form PB-109) to determine when follow-up testing and medical case management is necessary.

What Should Parents Know About Lead?

Lead exposure is a major safety hazard. No safe blood lead level in children has been identified. Small amounts of lead can build up in a child's body and cause temporary or permanent damage. Because of the potential risks associated with lead, parents should:

- **Communicate:** Tell the pediatrician about any changes in behavior, appetite or trouble sleeping.
- **Educate:** Learn how to prevent lead exposure. For educational materials and tips, visit DSHS.texas.gov/lead/parents.shtm.
- **Ask:** Ask the pediatrician about lead testing.

Keeping Your Family Safe from Lead Exposure

Even everyday activities like home renovations can pose a hazard if your home was built prior to 1978. Therefore, it's important to know for sure if you will be working with lead paint. Contact the Texas Department of State Health Services Environmental Lead Program at **(888) 778-440** or visit DSHS.state.tx.us/elp for more information.

If you own **AND** live in a house being renovated, you may want to have a certified Lead Inspector or Risk Assessor test for lead-based paint.

Otherwise, working with an EPA-Certified Lead Renovator is required. To locate an EPA-Certified Lead Renovator in your area, please visit: http://cfpub.epa.gov/flpp/searchrrp_firm.htm.

If you are renting a home being renovated or renting an older home that you suspect of having lead paint, **CONTACT** your landlord and ask about any potential lead risks.

Lead in the Workplace

In the United States, lead exposure in the workplace is an ongoing health problem. Work-related exposure occurs most often in the mining and manufacturing sector but can also occur in other industries including construction, painting, firing ranges and wholesale trade. The amount of lead workers are exposed to can vary depending on many different factors, including the particular job tasks performed and the length of exposure.

Sometimes, doing something as simple as wearing proper personal protective equipment like respiratory protection, goggles, gloves, boots, and protective clothing to prevent contact while working around lead and lead dust can dramatically reduce the chance of exposure.

Typically, prolonged lead exposure has both short-term and long-term health effects that range from changes in organ function to life-threatening intoxication. Lead exposure even at low levels can have lasting effects.



Health Effects of Lead Exposure

Below is a list of possible symptoms. Symptoms vary and not everyone may experience them. In some cases, symptoms may worsen with prolonged or increased exposure to lead.

Children	Both	Adults
Nervous system and kidney damage	Weight loss	Harm to a developing fetus
Speech, language, and behavior problems	Constipation	Increased chance of high blood pressure during pregnancy
Poor muscle coordination	Headaches	Fertility problems
Decreased muscle and bone growth	Irritability	Digestive problems
Learning disabilities	Encephalopathy	Memory and concentration problems
Attention deficit disorder and decreased intelligence	Death	Muscle and joint pain

For More Information

Please call at the Blood Lead Surveillance Branch at **(800) 588-1248**.

For information on how you can prevent or reduce lead exposure, visit the CDC's Lead Prevention Tips Website: CDC.gov/nceh/lead/tips.htm

trivia question

How long does lead stay in your system?

Lead stays in the blood for several months and it can be stored in the bones for **30 years** or more.