

What Your Child's Blood Lead Test Means

What is lead poisoning and why do we test blood?

Lead poisoning can present with no obvious symptoms, especially at lower blood levels, so having your child tested for lead is the only way to identify elevated levels. Having a blood lead test done tells you how much lead is in a child's blood. The lower the level, the better it is. A child's growth, behavior, and ability to learn can all be harmed by lead exposure.

In Vermont, children are tested for lead at their Well Baby visit at the doctor's office. We recommend that children be tested every year up until age six, since that is the time of the most growth, mentally and physically, in a child's life.

Children who reside in a home that was built before 1978 are at greater risk for lead poisoning. Lead poisoning occurs most commonly when children ingest the dust from old lead paint in a home. Friction surfaces, like old wood windows and doors, can generate lead dust, which isn't visible to the naked eye. Lead dust can get on children's hands and toys, and into their mouths through normal hand to mouth behavior.

There are two types of blood lead tests that your child can receive. The first is a simple finger or toe prick that will test a small sample of their blood for lead. The second test, a venous test, is a blood draw usually taken from a vein (often in the arm) and is the more precise of the two. Typically, a venous test is only done as a follow-up test if a finger prick test comes back as above 5 ug/dL.

Test Result in micrograms per deciliter (ug/dL)	Next Steps
0-2 ug/dL	There is a small amount of lead in your child's blood. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue to have your child tested every year until age six
2-4 ug/dL	Your child has a level of lead in their blood that is higher than average, but below the threshold for concern in Vermont and the CDC <ul style="list-style-type: none">Contact the Burlington Lead Program about having their nurse come out and do a follow-up finger prick testContact BLP to come out to do a site visit to help identify potential areas of concern and provide information on how to bring lead levels down
5-9 ug/dL	Your child has a level of lead in their blood that exceeds the threshold of concern by the CDC and the State of Vermont <ul style="list-style-type: none">You should contact your doctor to have a venous test done to verify these resultsContact the Burlington Lead Program to come out to do a site visit to help identify potential areas of concern and information on how to bring lead levels down
10 ug/dL – and above	There is a high level of lead in your child's blood. This triggers action from the Vermont Dept. of Health <ul style="list-style-type: none">You should have a venous test done to verify these results.You should expect to be contacted by the Vermont Dept. of Health regarding the test. They may set up visit to your home to identify the sources of lead and how to protect your child.Schedule a follow up test with your doctor to be tested again in 1-3 months.

How to Protect Your Child

House Cleaning

- Clean out old wood window sills and wells when opening and closing your windows with a wet paper towel. This will help pick up any lead dust that is generated when parts of the window rub against each other. Lead dust is harder to see than the regular dust that can collect on objects. Window wells, sills, and the floor can still have lead dust, even if they don't look dirty.
- Don't sweep, that can just redistribute lead dust. Instead use a wet paper towel or wet mop (Swiffer or something similar) to clean up the lead dust on the floor. Use a HEPA vacuum if possible. The Burlington Lead Program has some to borrow. Call 865-LEAD.



Washing Hands and Toys

- Wash your child's hand before eating and napping and after play time. This will help with preventing ingestion of lead dust.
- Wipe off toys to clean any lead dust that might have been picked up from the floor.



Tracking in Lead from Outside

- Use caution to not track any lead dust or soil into the room. Try to get in the habit of taking off your shoes when you come in the home. Lead in soil can be tracked in on the soles of your shoes. The soil around the perimeter of the home, out buildings, or in the green belts (where cars with leaded gas have idled) can all have high levels of lead.



Gardening Tips

- Use raised beds or planters with fresh soil when growing food at home. Do not grow food in the green belts near the road. Soil near the roadways can have high levels due to the leaded gas that was used until the 1980's and idling cars on the street. Plant ornamentals in those areas, but not plants you plan to eat.
- Sunflowers have been shown to absorb heavy metals in soil and can be good to help rejuvenate soil. Do not eat the seeds or put them in your compost if you plant sunflowers in the drip line of your home or in the green belt.



Foods

- Certain foods can help keep your child from absorbing too much lead. These foods include foods with:
 - Calcium - milk, cheese, yogurts, and leafy green vegetables
 - Proteins—lean meats and beans
 - Vitamin C—citrus fruits and vegetables

