

# TESTING FOR LEAD IN CHILDREN FACT SHEET

 Get the Lead Out!

**Why get tested?** Childhood lead poisoning causes permanent brain damage. And childhood lead poisoning does not cause spots or other easily visible symptoms. By the time symptoms come, the damage is done. The only way to know is to get tested!

**Who should get tested?** Children should be tested at one year of age and again at two years of age. Additional tests may be warranted until age six, depending upon circumstances. The Centers for Disease Control and the Michigan Department of Community Health require testing for all children who meet any one of the following criteria

- All children who live in designated **high-risk communities** (the cities of Grand Rapids, Muskegon, Muskegon Heights, Kalamazoo, Battle Creek and others). *The age and condition of the house do not matter, nor does family income!*
- All children on **Medicaid** or in the **WIC** program.
- Children who meet any one of the following conditions:
  - The child lives in or often visits a house, daycare, preschool, home of a relative, etc., built before 1950.
  - The child lives in or often visits a house built before 1978 that has been remodeled within the last year.
  - The child has a brother, sister or playmate with lead poisoning.
  - The child lives with an adult whose job or hobby involves lead.
  - The child's family uses home remedies or cultural practices that may contain lead.
  - The child is a foreign adoptee, refugee, migrant, immigrant, or foster care child.

**What should I expect?** There are two different procedures for testing your child for lead. Both are blood lead tests, the *only* reliable way to know if a child has been exposed. Most of the time a *capillary* test is used, which consists of a simple finger, toe or heel prick to collect a few drops of blood. This is the process used by some pediatricians and family doctors, and most WIC and public health departments. Medicaid will pay for the capillary draw.

Some providers and some insurance companies will require a *venous* draw, which means blood drawn from a vein, usually in the arm. This will require a second appointment at a lab. This process is required by some pediatricians and family doctors, as well as certain insurance plans (not Medicaid).

**Who pays for the test?** All insurance companies and Medicaid will pay for the test. Private insurance may require co-pay. Many public health departments will offer the test at low or no cost to those eligible and at-risk. Call to find out!



**Where should I get my child tested?** It is always best to get your healthcare from your child’s primary health care provider—their pediatrician or family doctor. Get it when you bring your child in for a well child check. Public health departments and many “free clinics” offer the testing for children that do not have a primary care provider. If you participate in WIC, Kent County WIC programs conduct the testing. Here is contact information for public health departments in Michigan’s high-risk communities in west Michigan that can help you get your child tested.

- **Berrien** County Health Dept., various locations, call (269) 926-7121
- **Calhoun** County Public Health Dept., 190 E. Michigan Avenue, Suite A100, (269) 969-6363
- **Kalamazoo** County Health Dept., 3299 Gull Road, Kalamazoo, (269) 373-5116
- **Kent** County Health Dept., 700 Fuller Ave NE, Grand Rapids, (616) 632-7063
- Public Health **Muskegon** County, 209 East Apple Ave, Muskegon, (231) 724-1209

**Who else should get tested?** Children who are older than two but less than six who have not been tested in the past should be tested if they previously or currently met the criteria on the other side of this page. Also, children should be re-tested until six years of age if any of their risk factors change—for example, if they move from one older house to another. When in doubt, ask you doctor for a test for your child!

For more information, contact us  
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