

# Lead Poisoning Quicksheet

October 2024

## Background

Lead is a naturally occurring metal. Lead is found in older house paint. Lead can build up in houses, dust, and soil. Lead is found in many products, including batteries and ammunition.

Lead poisoning occurs when lead builds up in the body. Even at low levels, **lead can cause serious harm.**

Lead poisoning can affect people of all ages. Adults may be exposed to lead from certain occupations or hobbies. Children under the age of 6 and pregnant women are especially at risk because the developing nervous system is very sensitive to lead.

## What are the effects of lead poisoning?

The effects of lead poisoning in children can include:

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Slowed growth and development
- Learning and behavior problems
- Hearing and speech problems

This can cause:

- Lower IQ
- Decreased ability to pay attention
- Underperformance in school

## Who is most at risk for lead poisoning?

- People in homes built before 1978
- Children under 6
- Pregnant people
- People in households involved in lead-related hobbies or occupations

## What should families do first?

**Talk to your child's pediatrician to obtain a lead test:**

- **A capillary sample** (finger or heel stick) is the fastest way to provide results but is usually followed by a second test. If lead is on the skin during a capillary test, it can produce higher levels in the blood, creating a false test.
- **A venous blood draw** takes blood from the child's vein, but it must be analyzed at a laboratory. Blood is less likely to be contaminated during this type of draw.

## What should families know?

Most children who have lead poisoning do not look or act sick. The only way to know if a child has lead poisoning is to get a blood lead test.

The most important step in protecting children and other vulnerable individuals from lead poisoning is **prevention**. Frequently wash your child's hands with soapy water, wet dust and mop (daily) with soapy water, and tape or paper over peeling paint to help prevent lead poisoning.

Blood lead testing for children enrolled in Medicaid is covered. Many private insurance policies also cover the cost of blood lead testing.

**Contact the Delaware County Health Department Wellness Line by phone (484)-276-2100 (Available 24/7) or email: [DelcoWellness@co.delaware.pa.us](mailto:DelcoWellness@co.delaware.pa.us)** if you have questions about lead exposure, proper cleaning methods to eliminate lead, environmental lead testing in your home, or need help obtaining a blood lead test for a child.