

IDPH Guidelines to Address Blood Lead Levels 5 – 9 µg/dL

Question: How does the new change affect the state's blood lead protocols?

Answer: Recent studies have shown adverse health effects in children occur at blood lead levels less than 10 µg/dL. In 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s advisory committee recommended new guidelines to address health effects associated with blood lead levels less than 10 µg/dL in children. The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) revised its guidelines in 2014 to address health concerns associated with lower blood lead levels. The change in Iowa's blood lead guidelines will mean that more children will be identified as having lead exposure earlier and parents, doctors, public health officials, and the public can take action earlier to reduce ongoing exposure to lead.

What has **not** changed in Iowa is the recommended guidelines for evaluation and treatment of children with blood lead levels greater than or equal to 10 µg/dL or those requiring chelation (BLL ≥45 µg/dL).

Primary prevention is the prevention of lead exposure before it occurs and is most important step parents, doctors, public health professionals, and others can take to eliminating lead in children.

Question: What should families know about childhood lead exposure risks in Iowa?

Answer: Children between the ages of 1 and 4 are the most likely to absorb enough lead to be poisoned, but anyone at any age can get exposed. Lead-based paint is the leading cause of lead poisoning of pre-school children in Iowa. Families living in homes built before 1978 need to learn to identify lead hazards and understand that they can reduce their family's exposure risk. Families should contact their local public health department or the Iowa Department of Public Health (800-972-2026) to get information on identifying and properly fixing lead hazards.

Question: What does a child's BLL of 5 to 9 µg/dL mean?

Answer: Children with a blood lead level (BLL) in this range have a blood lead level higher than most children their age. This slightly elevated BLL means they are being exposed to lead somewhere in their living or play environment. This is the time to take action to prevent additional exposure to lead from happening.

Question: How does a child with a BLL of 5 to 9 µg/dL get exposed to lead?

Answer: These children often live or regularly visit homes built before 1978 and are exposed to lead dust from painted surfaces that are cracking, chipping, or peeling or during home renovation. A child's blood lead level becomes elevated when they swallow lead from dust, dirt, or paint chips, often by touching a surface and then putting their fingers in their mouth. Children with high hand-to-mouth activity are more likely to have blood lead levels in this range or higher. Young children may also mouth objects that contain lead including toys, jewelry, window sills, or household decor. If renovation was done in the home, a child can also be exposed by breathing in lead dust or vapors. Rare cases in Iowa have been linked to the use of imported home

remedies, jewelry, or other lead containing items. Iowa has not had a documented lead exposure linked to lead-contaminated water.

Question: What should parents and guardians know about a child with a BLL of 5 to 9 µg/dL?

Answer: This blood test result is a signal that their child is getting exposed to lead at a level higher than normal. It is important that parents or guardians identify possible lead risks for their child, and take action to reduce lead exposure at this time or the child may continue to be exposed and their blood lead level could go even higher. Other young children in the household may also be at risk and should have a blood lead test if one has not been done recently.

Question: What can a parent or guardian do immediately (before additional testing or evaluation of the home) if their child has a BLL of 5 to 9 µg/dL?

Answer: Parents and guardians can keep the child away from suspected lead hazards (areas where paint chips or dust are seen), wash the child's hands and face often, and wash dust or dirt off surfaces (windows, floors, toys, etc.) where the child spends time. They should also clean up any visible paint chips.

Question: What should a parent or guardian do within the next month if their child has a BLL of 5 to 9 µg/dL?

Answer: Parents or guardians can take these steps to make their homes more lead-safe:

- Contact your local public health department or IDPH (800-972-2026) for answers to questions and information about resources in your area. A booklet, "*Lead Poisoning: How to Protect Iowa Families*" is available at (www.idph.state.ia.us/LPP/Resources.aspx) with a checklist to help parents and guardians check their homes for potential lead hazards.
- Once lead hazards are identified, keep children away from the area or hazard until it has been fixed or eliminated.
- Regularly clean with soapy water areas where dust, paint chips, or known hazards are found in older homes. In Iowa, these may include window sills and troughs, porches and floors, especially if there is chipped or peeling paint seen.
- Wash toys, blankets and stuffed animals used by the child regularly to reduce lead dust.
- Lead hazards should be fixed using lead-safe work practices (option for home owners) or by an Iowa certified lead professional (required for rental properties) to reduce additional exposure.
- Remove recalled toys and jewelry from play areas. Stay up-to-date on current recalls by visiting the Consumer Product Safety Commission's Web site: www.cpsc.gov/.
- Wipe your feet on mats before entering the home, especially if you work in occupations where lead is used. Removing your shoes when you enter the home helps control lead that can be tracked into the home from outside or work-contaminated shoes.
- Renovation activities in older homes should be performed by Iowa certified lead safe renovators who are trained by Iowa-approved training providers to follow lead-safe work

practices. Otherwise, home renovation or repair activities like sanding, cutting, and demolition in homes built before 1978 can create hazardous lead dust by disturbing lead-based paint.

Question: When should my child with a BLL of 5 to 9 µg/dL be retested?

Answer: Talk to your medical provider. IDPH recommends having another blood lead test done within 1-3 months of a child's first blood lead test in this range, or according to their doctor's orders, whichever is sooner. Additional retests within 3-9 months may be needed for repeat blood lead levels in this range.

Question: What should a medical provider do when a child has a BLL of 5 to 9 µg/dL?

Answer: A medical provider should:

- Discuss blood lead results with family and provide them with written information on how to protect their child from future lead exposure. A copy of the booklet *Lead Poisoning: How to Protect Iowa Families* can be downloaded from the Iowa Department of Public Health website at <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/LPP/>.
- Discuss hygiene, nutrition, and sources of lead exposure.
- Schedule a follow-up blood lead test date and discuss importance of follow up medical testing and evaluation.

For additional information contact the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 800-972-2026.