

People's Health

Outcomes • Planning • Evaluation



Know the Facts: Childhood Lead Poisoning

DID YOU KNOW?

- Lead poisoning is one of the most preventable environment-related health problems of young children.
- Lead poisoning often has no obvious symptoms, and frequently goes unrecognized.
- Lead poisoning can affect nearly every organ system in the body.
- Lead poisoning can cause learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and, at very high levels, seizures, coma and even death.
- Occupations that work with lead include remodeling or painting pre-1978 homes and working with batteries or radiators.

Percent of children with blood lead levels of 5µg/dL or more among children screened, younger than 6 years*

Year	California	Shasta
2007	7.0%	10.7%
2008	4.1%	5.0%
2009	4.0%	2.5%
2010	3.1%	2.9%
2011	2.5%	2.1%
2012	1.9%	1.1%

*Laboratories began reporting all blood lead level data electronically to the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch in 2005. Prior to 2005, only elevated levels were reported and not all data was electronic. Due to these changes in data reporting, 2007 is the first year of the most complete data.

WHERE WE WERE (BASELINE):

In Shasta County, 10.7% of children under 6 years who were screened had blood lead levels of $\geq 5\mu\text{g/dL}$ during 2007.

WHERE WE ARE:

In Shasta County, 1.1% of children under 6 years who were screened had blood lead levels of $\geq 5\mu\text{g/dL}$ during 2012.

WHERE WE ARE AIMING (HP2020 GOAL):

Not established.

DEFINITION:

The Centers for Disease Control uses these definitions for all states:

- **Test:** Any blood lead draw (capillary, venous or unknown sample type) on a child that produces a quantifiable result and is analyzed by a certified facility or an approved portable device.
- **Screening test:** A blood lead test for a child age <72 months who previously did not have a confirmed elevated BLL. (Note: A child may be screened multiple times within a year, but would be counted only once for each year.)
- **Elevated BLL:** A single blood lead test (capillary or venous) at or above $5\mu\text{g/dL}$.
- **Confirmed elevated BLL $\geq 5\mu\text{g/dL}$:** A child with one venous blood specimen $\geq 5\mu\text{g/dL}$, or two capillary blood specimens $\geq 5\mu\text{g/dL}$ drawn within 12 weeks of each other.
- **Unconfirmed elevated BLL $\geq 5\mu\text{g/dL}$:** A single capillary blood lead test $\geq 5\mu\text{g/dL}$, or two capillary tests $\geq 5\mu\text{g/dL}$ drawn more than 12 weeks apart.
- **Percent of children with confirmed elevated BLLs:** The number of children less than 72 months of age with a confirmed elevated blood lead level of $\geq 5\mu\text{g/dL}$ divided by the number of children less than 72 months of age tested for blood lead, multiplied by 100. Also referenced as "Case Rate."
- **Percent of children tested:** The number of children less than 72 months of age tested for blood lead divided by the total number of children less than 72 months of age, multiplied by 100.

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KEY POINTS:

- In 2012, at least 4 million households had children living in them who were exposed to high levels of lead. Approximately half a million U.S. children ages 1-5 had blood lead levels above 5 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$).
- In 2007-2008, the percentage of children less than 6 years of age with blood lead levels of 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ or higher in Shasta County was higher than the average state level but has been lower than the state since 2009.
- The percent of children with blood lead levels of ≥ 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ among children aged less than 6 years who were screened decreased in California and Shasta County during recent years to 1.9% and 1.1%, respectively, in 2012.

PRIMARY PREVENTION ACTIVITIES:

- All children taking part in government-funded programs such as Medi-Cal, WIC and Head Start must be tested for lead poisoning at 12 and 24 months of age.
- Lead poisoning occurs in any socioeconomic class and children should be screened by their physician.
- Never sand, dry scrape, power wash or sandblast paint of pre-1978 homes unless it has been tested for lead. Talk to your state or local health department about testing paint and dust from your home for lead if you live in a house or apartment built before 1978, especially if young children live with you or visit you.
- Mop floors, damp-wipe window sills, vacuum, wash all surfaces with household cleaners and frequently wash a child's hands, pacifiers and toys to reduce exposure to lead.
- Use only cold water from the tap for drinking, cooking and making baby formula. Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead. Most lead in household water usually comes from the plumbing in your house.
- Avoid using home remedies (such as arzacon, greta, pay-loo-ah) and cosmetics (such as kohl, alkohol) that contain lead.
- Lead is in pots and dishes that are old, handmade or made outside of the United States. Have these tested for lead before you use them.
- If you are exposed to lead at work, change out of your work clothes and shoes and wash or shower before coming home.

From the Desk of Andrew Deckert, MD, MPH

*Shasta County
Public Health Officer*



Lead poisoning is not common in the United States any more, but it is an extremely dangerous disease. Prior to 1978, lead was a common ingredient in most U.S. paints and gasoline. California removed lead from gasoline in 1991.

Children under age 6 are at risk because they are growing so rapidly and because they tend to put their hands or other objects, which may be contaminated with lead dust, into their mouths.

Children may eat paint chips or chew on the surfaces of cribs, highchairs, windows, woodwork, walls, doors or railings. Lead may be in the soil where children play, especially near busy roadways or factories.

Ask a doctor to test your child if you are concerned about your child being exposed to lead.

To your health!