

What Does Your Child's Lead Test Result Mean?

The amount of lead found in a child's blood is called the blood lead level. A blood test tells us how much lead (in micrograms: μg) is in a child's blood (per deciliter: dL). The blood lead level will tell us how much lead your child has been exposed to in the last few months. This fact sheet explains what your child's blood lead test results may mean.

To find out how much lead is in a child's blood, a small amount of blood is taken from the child's arm or finger. Blood taken from an arm vein is called a *venous blood test*. This involves drawing blood into a tube and sending it to a lab. There could be a wait-time of several days to receive the results back from the lab. Taking blood from a child's finger is called a finger-stick or a *capillary test*. The blood may be sent to a lab or may be analyzed while you wait. Sometimes the blood from a capillary test may be contaminated by a small amount of dust or dirt on the child's hand. This may cause a wrong or falsely high test result. If your child's capillary test shows a high lead level, you may be asked to get a venous blood test, which can be more accurate.



LEAD WARNING
Lead Can Poison Your Child

Below 2 μg /dL

This is a typical blood lead level. Continue to avoid exposures to lead.

- Remember to wash your child's hands often, especially before meals and after playing outside.
- Lead absorption is increased when there is not enough iron or calcium in a child's diet. Feed your child a diet that will help protect them from lead. Serve foods high in calcium, iron and vitamin C, and low in fat.

2–4 μg /dL

This level is slightly above average. Be aware of potential risk factors around your home and environment to avoid exposures to lead.

- Remember to wash your child's hands often, especially before meals and after playing outside.
- Soil may contain lead. Use door mats to wipe off shoes at entrances or remove shoes before entering your house.
- Check with the Consumer Product Safety Commission website (www.cpsc.gov) to see if any of your child's toys, jewelry, or other products have been recalled. Do not let your child play with recalled items.
- Lead absorption is increased when there is not enough iron or calcium in a child's diet. Feed your child a diet that will help protect them from lead. Serve foods high in calcium, iron and vitamin C, and low in fat.

5–9 μg /dL

This level is above average and means that there is an exposure to lead. You should take steps to identify possible sources of lead in your child's environment in order to prevent any further exposure.

- If you live in or spend a lot of time in a house that was built before 1978, regularly inspect the home for signs of chipping, peeling, or deteriorating paint.
- Remember to wash your child's hands often, especially before meals and after playing outside.
- Soil may contain lead. Use door mats to wipe off shoes at entrances or remove shoes before entering your house.
- Check with the Consumer Product Safety Commission website (www.cpsc.gov) to see if any of your child's toys, jewelry, or other products have been recalled. Do not let your child play with recalled items.
- Lead absorption is increased when there is not enough iron or calcium in a child's diet. Feed your child a diet that will help protect them from lead. Serve foods high in calcium, iron and vitamin C, and low in fat.
- If you work with lead, you could bring it home on your hands and clothes. Shower and change your clothes before coming home. Launder your work clothes separately from the rest of your family's clothes.

10–20 µg /dL

Any level above 10 µg/dL is considered high. If your child had a capillary test performed and the results are above 10 µg/dL, a venous blood lead test (from an arm vein) will need to be taken as soon as possible to confirm the blood lead level. The higher the blood lead level on the capillary test, the more urgent the need for a confirmation test.

The higher the lead level, the greater the risk for problems with growth and learning. **Your child will need another venous blood test in three months to see if the lead level has come down.**

Identify and remove possible lead hazards. Your local health department may contact you to schedule a home visit and help you identify lead hazards. Sources of lead can be found in the home, school, yard, or places your child frequently visits.

- If you live in or spend a lot of time in a house that was built before 1978, regularly inspect the home for signs of chipping, peeling or deteriorating paint.
- Some traditional cultural remedies contain very dangerous levels of lead (such as azarcon, greta, kohl, or paylooah).
- Remember to wash your child's hands often, especially before meals and after playing outside.
- Soil may contain lead. Use door mats to wipe off shoes at entrances or remove shoes before entering your house.
- Check with the Consumer Product Safety Commission website (www.cpsc.gov) to see if any of your child's toys, jewelry, or other products have been recalled. Do not let your child play with recalled items.
- Lead absorption is increased when there is not enough iron or calcium in a child's diet. Feed your child a diet that will help protect them from lead. Serve foods high in calcium, iron and vitamin C, and low in fat.
- If you work with lead, you could bring it home on your hands and clothes. Shower and change your clothes before coming home. Launder your work clothes separately from the rest of your family's clothes.

Above 20 µg /dL

Levels above 20 µg /dL are very dangerous. Your child needs to be seen by a doctor or health care provider for a medical exam as soon as possible. Very high levels of lead can damage the brain and kidneys. **Your child will need another venous blood test in one month to see if the lead level has come down.**

Lead hazards in your child's environment must be found and removed immediately. Your local health department may contact you to schedule a home visit and help you identify lead hazards. Sources of lead can be found in the home, school, yard, or places your child frequently visits.

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Possible Lead Hazards In The Home

- Deteriorating lead-based paint (peeling, chipping, cracking, or damaged)
- Soil and dust
- Toys, furniture, and jewelry
- Lead-glazed pottery
- Hobbies such as stained glass, making fishing weights, and welding
- Folk remedies

Washington State Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

1-800-909-9898 • <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/lead>