

# Lead

## *Information for Parents*

Updated 3/25/26

### What is lead?

- Lead is a metal found in nature. It can be found in all parts of our environment – the soil, the water, and even inside our homes.
- Lead is a poison when it gets into the body, and it can stay in the body for a long time.
- Lead is bad for the health of babies and young children. Their bodies absorb lead more easily than the bodies of adults.

### What is lead poisoning?

Lead poisoning is caused by swallowing or breathing lead. Lead poisons children when it gets into their bodies.

Exposure to lead can:

- Hurt the brain, kidneys, and nervous system
- Slow growth and development
- Make it harder for the child to learn
- Damage hearing and speech
- Cause behavior problems



Regular testing and early detection can prevent long-term harm from lead exposure.

### How do children get lead poisoning?

#### Lead Paint

Most children get lead poisoning from lead paint. Lead paint is often found in both the inside and outside of homes built before 1978.

Lead paint chips and dust come from:

- old paint that is peeling and cracking
- opening and closing old windows
- home repairs and renovations

Children may swallow or eat lead paint dust and paint chips.

#### Household Items

Some toys, jewelry, pottery, and home remedies may contain lead. Visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission's website at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) for recalls.

#### Water

Lead can enter water:

- if there is a lead service line
- through lead fixtures

## How do I know if my home has lead in it?

- The Massachusetts Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program records the lead history of homes and daycares built before 1978. Look up history at [mass.gov/info-details/find-your-homes-lead-history](https://mass.gov/info-details/find-your-homes-lead-history)
- If your property was built before 1978, it may have lead in it. Ask a private lead inspector or the Boston Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program to inspect your property.
- Find out whether your home's service line is made from lead by checking the Boston Water and Sewer Commission's lead service line map at [www.bwsc.org](http://www.bwsc.org) or by calling 617-989-7888.



## How do I know if my child has been exposed to lead?

- The only way to know whether your child has been exposed to lead is through a blood test. It measures how much lead is in your child's blood.
- There is no safe amount of lead in the body.
- The Massachusetts Lead Law requires children in Boston be tested every year until the age of 4, and before they enter daycare and kindergarten.

If your child's blood lead level is between 5-9 ug/dL

- Your child has a blood lead level of concern.
- Your child should get a blood test again within 3 months after their first test.
- Your child's doctor may prescribe vitamins and a special diet.
- Consider requesting a lead inspection from a Boston Public Health Commission.

If your child's blood lead level is 10 ug/dL or higher

- Your child has lead poisoning.
- A lead inspection of your home is required. A lead inspector and community health worker will contact you to schedule an appointment.
- Talk to your doctor about re-testing.

## What can I do to prevent lead poisoning?

- Get your home inspected for lead paint.
- Feed your child a healthy diet, including foods that contain calcium, vitamin C, and iron.
- Remove shoes before entering your home.
- Wash your child's hands frequently.
- Have your child tested annually until the age of 4.
- Find out if any of your child's toys have been recalled at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)
- Find out if your home's water service line is made from lead.