

Understanding Your Child's Lead Test

The amount of lead found in a child's blood is called a blood lead level. Blood lead tests tell how many micrograms (millionth of a gram) of lead are in each deciliter (tenth of a liter) of a child's blood ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$). A blood lead level will tell if a child has been exposed to lead in the last 3-4 months.

To find out how much lead is in a child's blood, a small amount of blood is taken from a child's arm, finger or heel. Taking blood from a child's finger or heel is called a finger or heel-stick or a capillary test. Sometimes the blood from a capillary test may be contaminated by a small amount of lead on the child's hand or foot. This may cause an inaccurate or false elevated test result. Blood taken from an arm vein (venous blood test) is a more reliable test.

5-9 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$

If the blood was taken from your child's finger or heel it may be in this range due to contamination. If the test was a venous draw it MAY be a sign of recent exposure to lead. At this level no medical management is needed, but parents should take steps to identify possible sources of lead in their child's environment in order to prevent any further exposure. There is no totally safe level of lead for children. Recent research has shown that lead levels below 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ can lower intelligence. You should keep your child away from lead around the home and give your child healthy foods. Lead absorption is increased when there is not enough iron or calcium in a child's diet. Serve foods high in calcium, iron, and vitamin C and low in fat.

10-14 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$

Any level above ten is considered elevated. If a capillary test is above ten, a venous blood lead test (from an arm vein) will need to be taken within 3 months to confirm the blood lead level. Children can be hurt by lead and may not look or act sick. If the lead level doesn't drop down, children can experience permanent health problems. Identify and remove possible lead hazards and feed your child a diet that will help protect them from lead. Lead absorption is increased when there is not enough iron or calcium in a child's diet. Serve foods high in calcium, iron, and vitamin C and low in fat. Your child will need another blood test in 3 months to see if the level of lead has lowered.

15-19 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$

A level of 15-19 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ means there is a greater risk for problems with growth and learning. Children can be hurt by lead and may not look or act sick. If a capillary test is at this level, a venous blood lead test (from an arm vein) will need to be taken within 1 month to confirm the blood lead level. Sources of lead can be found in the home, school, yard or places a child frequently visits. It is important to identify and remove lead hazards. The local health department will contact you and schedule a home visit to help you identify lead hazards. Lead absorption is increased when there is not enough iron or calcium in a child's diet. Serve foods high in calcium, iron, and vitamin C and low in fat. The child will need another blood test in 3 months to see if the level of lead has lowered.

20-44 µg/dl

If a capillary test is at this level, a venous blood lead test (from an arm vein) will need to be taken within 1 week to a month to confirm the blood lead level. The higher the blood lead level on the screening or capillary test, the more urgent the need for a confirmation test. A child with a confirmed venous draw in this range has a high lead level and needs to be seen by a doctor or health care provider for a medical exam. Sources of lead can be found in the home, school, yard or places a child frequently visits. It is important to identify and remove lead hazards. The county health department will contact you and schedule a home visit to identify lead hazards. Lead hazards must be found and reduced as quickly as possible. Lead absorption is increased when there is not enough iron or calcium in a child's diet. Serve foods high in calcium, iron, and vitamin C and low in fat. The child's medical provider should be involved in helping bring this blood lead level down by managing the child's diet and providing vitamin supplements if needed. Your child will need another blood test in 1 month to see if the level of lead has lowered.

Above 45 µg/dl

If a capillary test is at this level, a venous blood lead test (from an arm vein) will need to be taken immediately or within 48 hours to confirm the blood lead level. The higher the blood lead level on the screening or capillary test, the more urgent the need for a confirmation test. A child with a confirmed venous draw in this range has a dangerous lead level and may need medical treatment. Very high levels of lead can damage the brain and kidneys. Lead hazards in the child's environment must be found and eliminated. The child's medical provider should be involved in helping bring this blood lead level down by managing the child's diet and providing vitamin supplements if needed. Your child will need regular medical follow-up and re-testing to see if the level of lead has lowered.

Protect Your Child From Lead

No matter what the level of lead in your child's blood, you should:

- Learn about lead and its effects on children
- Keep children away from lead around your home
- Wash children's hands, pacifiers and toys often to remove lead dust
- Give your child healthy foods that will help protect their bodies from lead
- Talk to your medical provider about the next time your child should have a lead test
- Learn more about how to prevent lead poisoning by calling:

Call the LeadLine
503-988-4000 Portland Metro Area
1-800-368-5060 Statewide