



Lead Poisoning is Preventable

Protecting children from lead exposure is important for their long-term health and well-being. Lead exposures can occur when a child comes in contact with lead by touching, swallowing or breathing in lead or lead dust. Children younger than age 6 are particularly vulnerable because their bodies are still developing, and they are more likely to put hands or other objects (which may be contaminated) into their mouths. Lead enters the blood quickly once swallowed and the effects can be long-term. There are many things that affect how a child's body handles lead exposure, such as their age, nutritional status, source of lead exposure, length of exposure, and pre-existing or underlying health conditions.¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has determined there are no "safe" blood lead levels in children.

The Center for Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Services estimates there are over four million children who reside in housing where they are exposed to lead in the United States.² In Indiana, housing is the primary factor for elevated blood lead levels. Homes built prior to 1980 present the greatest risk with lead pipes or lead-based paints. It is important for all children — and required by federal law for children enrolled in Medicaid — to receive blood lead screening tests to identify those with elevated blood lead levels (EBLLs) as early as possible. Many children who have lead in their bodies do not show obvious, immediate symptoms. However, even low levels of lead in the blood can cause damage to the brain and nervous system, delayed growth and development, learning and behavior problems, and hearing and speech problems.³ In addition to children, other high-risk groups include immigrants, pregnant women and adults working in industries with high lead exposure. These adults can also bring lead home to their children.

Sources:

1. Lead. (2022, January 13). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/blood-lead-levels.htm>
2. Lead Screening. (2022, January 13). Retrieved from <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/benefits/early-and-periodic-screening-diagnostic-and-treatment/lead-screening/index.html>
3. Lead. (2022, January 13) Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/health-effects.htm>
4. Lead. (2022, January 13) Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/docs/5things-508.pdf>

The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) requires that all children enrolled in Medicaid receive a blood lead test between 9 months and 12 months and again at 24 months of age. If the member is at high risk for lead exposure, the initial test should be performed at the 6-month visit and repeated at the 12-month and 24-month visits. All children between the ages of 36 months and 72 months must receive a blood lead test if they have not been previously tested for lead poisoning.

If your child has a high lead level, there are things you can do to help. Make a plan with your doctor to determine the best treatment for your child. If you have concerns about your child's development, consider talking with your child's doctor about a referral to First Steps for developmental screening and consideration for early intervention. Have your home inspected by a licensed lead inspector, clean up any lead dust from old paint cracks using a wet paper towel (being sure to wash your hands after), give your child healthy foods with calcium, iron and vitamin C, as these foods may help keep lead out of the body, and seek support through your local health department.⁴

To support healthy behaviors, CareSource encourages members to enroll in our incentive programs Babies First® and Kids First. Once enrolled, members are eligible to receive rewards for activities such as a blood lead test. They will receive \$10.00 for completion of a blood lead test prior to 15 months, and again if a second test is completed between 15 and 24 months. To find out more information or to enroll go to: <https://www.caresource.com/in/plans/medicaid/benefits-services/additional-services/rewards/>.

Time to get the lead out!

**Dr. Cameual Wright, Vice President,
Market Chief Medical Officer, CareSource Indiana**

**CareSource**