

Blood Lead Screening in Refugee Children



What is lead?

Lead is a metal that is used a lot in places where our refugee children come from. It is found in gasoline, paint, batteries, water pipes, jewelry, dishes, and pots. It is still found in some places in the US as well.

What is lead poisoning?

Lead is a poison if it is breathed in or swallowed. Lead can cause serious health problems. It is most harmful to the growing brain and nervous system of babies and young children.

Children are at the highest risk:

- Because their brains and nervous systems are still developing.
- Because young children put their hands and toys in their mouths.
 - Lead in the dirt or dust on the floor and toys increases exposure.
 - Wash your child's hands after playing outside and before meals.
- Because children's growing bodies take in more lead in their intestines than adults.
- If they are malnourished and anemic. Anemia adds to the absorption of lead into the bloodstream.

Where is lead found:

- In the US, lead is found:
 - In older homes (built before 1950) that still have old paint and pipes
 - In tamarind candies made in Mexico
 - In lead-glazed pottery made in parts of Latin America
- In peeling and chipping paint on the outside of older homes. In dust and soil in and around older homes and near freeways.
- In countries where leaded gas is widely used.
- Near mines, battery recycling places, factories that make bullets.
- In medications, cosmetics, spices, and other products made outside of the US.

How does lead poisoning affect children:

- It can lower IQ and ability to pay attention.
- It can cause learning problems.
- It can cause problems with behavior such as hyperactivity.
- It can harm growth and cause hearing loss.
- At very high levels, it can cause seizures, coma, and even death.

Steps to Prevent Lead Poisoning in newly arrived children in the US

- **Have your child's blood tested** for lead **within 3 to 6 months after immigration** or placed in housing.
- **Repeat** blood lead screening **3-6 months after first testing**.
- Get blood lead screening for your young children born in the US at the times recommended by their doctor.
- Avoid tamarind candies made in Mexico and glazed clay cookware.
- Don't let your child play around chipping or peeling paint on walls or windows.
- Ask the resettlement worker to check how to make the home lead-safe or lead-free.
- Get the home checked by calling the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program in your area.
- Have a health expert check how well your child is eating. Good nutrition lowers the amount of lead absorbed in the body.
- A diet low in iron and calcium can add to the amount of lead absorbed.
- Children should have a diet high in iron, calcium, vitamin C and low in fat.

Good sources of Iron, Calcium and Vitamin C are:

- Iron
 - Red meat, fish, chicken, iron-added to cereals, and dried fruits.
- Calcium
 - Green leafy vegetables, low-fat yogurt, milk, and cheese.
- Vitamin C
 - Oranges, grapefruit, tomatoes, green peppers, and cantaloupe.



Resources that may help you

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program
(800) 852-5770

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Childhood Lead Poisoning and Prevention:
<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/>

The United States Environmental Protection Agency - Lead: <https://www.epa.gov/lead>

Do you have health questions?



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