

Administration for Children and Families	U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES	
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## INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

**TO:** All Head Start and Early Head Start Grant Recipients

**SUBJECT:** The Role of Head Start Programs in Addressing Lead in Water

### INFORMATION:

Lead is a toxic metal and there is no safe blood lead level for children.<sup>i</sup> Because their bodies are still developing, children under the age of 6 are at greatest risk for significant and potentially lifelong health problems as a result of exposure. They are more likely to come into contact with lead through paint or dust since young children often put their hands or objects in their mouths. However, lead in drinking water can also be a significant contributor to overall exposure to lead. This is particularly true for infants whose diet consists of food and liquids made with water, such as baby food or formula. The adverse health effects of lead exposure can be both physical and behavioral. Even low levels of lead in children can lead to anemia, behavior and learning problems, and other concerns.

Head Start programs have a critical role to play in [preventing lead poisoning in children](#). Programs are required to maintain a facility that is free from pollutants, hazards, and toxins that are accessible to children and could endanger their safety — and that includes lead in water and paint. As part of Head Start monitoring, programs can expect to be asked about their processes to identify lead hazards and mitigate them. This Information Memorandum highlights available resources for programs to address lead in water specifically.

### Testing for and Addressing Lead in Water

The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) has developed a number of resources to guide programs to test and remediate for lead in water.

There are no specific funds designated for the purpose of lead assessments in Head Start programs. However, grant recipients may budget program funds to address lead in water, including necessary minor renovations to facilities. Allowable uses of program funds may include:

- Testing for lead in water
- Remediation actions such as purchasing, installing, and maintaining point-of-use devices for lead removal, such as water filters
- Replacing water fixtures and plumbing, including lead service lines<sup>ii</sup>

As programs consider their needs related to addressing lead in water in Head Start facilities, the Administration for Children and Families encourages grant recipients to submit one-time funding applications for facility needs not supported by operations funding. Note these one-time requests are addressed by priority and subject to availability of funds.

### **Other Federal Funding Sources**

Head Start programs may be able to leverage [EPA funding](#) to eliminate lead in their facilities. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, 2022, authorized increased funding of \$700 million over 5-years across two grant programs:

- [Voluntary School and Child Care Lead Testing and Reduction Grant Program](#)
- [Reducing Lead in Drinking Water Grant Program](#)

These programs aim to address lead in water through testing, remediation, and infrastructure improvements, including in child care and school settings. Grant recipients should reach out to their respective [state agency](#) to learn more about the EPA programs and other available resources.

### **Partnering with Families to Promote Children’s Healthy Development**

Head Start programs are already working closely with families and health care providers to make sure children are [screened](#) for lead poisoning ([45 CFR §1302.46](#)). These screenings align with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ (CMS) universal blood lead screening requirement for all Medicaid-eligible children, under their states’ [Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Testing](#) schedule.<sup>iii</sup> The Office of Head Start (OHS) applauds programs’ ongoing efforts to partner with [parents and caregivers](#) to make sure all enrolled children receive required blood screening.

OHS continues to encourage programs to leverage [available resources](#) in discussing with families how to prevent and address lead exposure in the home, such as through:

- Testing for lead in paint hazards and in water
- Minimizing children and pregnant persons’ exposure to paint hazards, especially in homes built before 1978
- Creating barriers between living or play areas and possible lead hazards
- Cleaning and hygiene practices, such as regularly mopping and washing hands and toys

To learn more about the role Head Start programs play in keeping children safe and supporting families to prevent lead poisoning, visit the [Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center](#) and [Office of Early Childhood Development](#) websites.

Thank you for the work you do on behalf of children and families.

Sincerely,

/ Khari M. Garvin /

Khari M. Garvin  
Director  
Office of Head Start

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<sup>i</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has established a blood lead “reference value” that serves as a screening tool to identify children with higher levels of lead in their blood compared with most children. However, no safe blood lead level in children has been identified: <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/features/leadpoisoning/index.html>

<sup>ii</sup> As long as total costs for any proposed plumbing improvements, such as replacing water fixtures and lead service lines, are less than \$250,000, they would be considered minor renovations and allowable expenditures with program funds. If costs are anticipated to exceed \$250,000, programs should contact their regional office to determine appropriate next steps.

<sup>iii</sup> Arizona is currently the only state approved by CMS to implement a targeted lead screening program.

# Blood Lead Levels in Children

## What Do You Need to Know to Protect Children?

Lead exposure occurs when a child comes in contact with lead by swallowing or breathing in lead or lead dust. After a child inhales or swallows lead, it quickly enters the blood. No safe blood level in children has been identified. Even low levels of lead in blood have been shown to affect a child's learning capacity, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement. The effects of lead exposure can be permanent. The most important step parents, doctors, and others can take is to prevent lead exposure before it occurs.

### Top 8 Ways to Protect Children from Lead Exposure

1. **Get a blood test.** Parents can talk to their child's healthcare provider about getting a blood lead test. A blood test is the best way to determine if a child has been exposed to lead. Based on blood lead test results, healthcare providers can recommend follow-up actions and care.
2. **Get the child's home checked.** Have the home checked by a licensed lead inspector if they live in a home or building built before 1978. Those who rent should ask their landlord to have their home checked. [Visit the Environmental Protection Agency's \(EPA\) web page](#) to find a certified inspector or risk assessor.
3. **Hire trained contractors.** When planning renovations, hire contractors who are trained in lead-safe practices. Visit [EPA's web page](#) to find a certified contractor.
4. **Regularly wet-mop floors, windows, and windowsills.** Household dust can be a major source of lead in homes and buildings built before 1978.
5. **Leave shoes by the door or outside.** This is especially important when someone works with lead or has a hobby that involves lead, such as construction or shooting firearms.
6. **Shower and change clothes and shoes after working around lead-based products.** This can keep lead dust from being tracked through the home and prevent families from being exposed.
7. **Protect soil.** Cover bare soil with grass, mulch, or wood chips and prevent children from playing in bare soil that may be contaminated with lead. See the [Lead in soil web page](#) for more information.
8. **Avoid certain children's products and toys.** Some toys, especially imported toys, antique toys, and toy jewelry may contain lead. Visit the [Consumer Product Safety Commission's \(CPSC\) web page](#) for photos and descriptions of currently recalled toys.



#### Lead can be found in a variety of sources. These include

- Paint in homes and buildings built before 1978
- Water supplied through pipes or plumbing fixtures that contain lead
- Soil contaminated with lead from exterior lead-based paint, car exhaust, and factories
- Some products such as toys and jewelry
- Some imported foods and medicines
- Certain jobs and hobbies



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention

## Update on Blood Lead Levels in Children

- CDC uses a [blood lead “reference value”](#) (BLRV) to identify children with higher levels of lead in their blood compared to most children. This level is based on the U.S. population of children ages 1–5 years who are in the top 2.5% of children when tested for lead in their blood, according to data from the [National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey \(NHANES\)](#).
- In October 2021, CDC updated the BLRV to 3.5 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL).
- Higher blood lead levels are more common among children from some racial and ethnic minority groups, from low-income households, who were born outside of the United States, and who live in housing built before 1978. These groups are less likely to have access to quality housing and may be discriminated against when looking for a safe, healthy place to live. As a result, these groups are more likely to be exposed to lead from living in homes that contain leaded paint, pipes, faucets, and plumbing fixtures.

## Additional Recommendations to Prevent Childhood Lead Exposure

- CDC recommends that healthcare providers and public health professionals focus blood lead testing efforts on neighborhoods and children at high risk, based on age of housing and [social and demographic risk factors](#).
  - ♦ The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services requires all children enrolled in Medicaid to get tested for lead at ages 12 and 24 months, or age 24–72 months if they have never been tested.
- Federal agencies, health departments, providers, communities, and other partners are encouraged to
  - ♦ Focus resources on children with the highest levels of lead in their blood compared with levels in most children in that age range.
  - ♦ Identify and eliminate sources of lead exposure.
  - ♦ Take more prompt actions to reduce the harmful effects of lead.



**Learn more at**  
[www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead)

# How to Prevent Lead Poisoning in Children

Accessible Version: <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/docs/how-to-prevent-lead-poisoning-in-children.html>

No safe level of lead in children has been identified. Even low levels of lead in blood can hurt a child's ability to learn, pay attention, and do well in school.

The good news is that childhood lead poisoning is preventable. Learn about common sources of lead and steps to reduce your child's risk of lead exposure.

## Know the common sources of lead

Lead can be found where children live, play, and learn.



**Paint.** In homes or buildings built before 1978, assume that the paint contains lead unless tests show otherwise. When the paint peels and cracks, it makes lead paint chips and dust. Children can be exposed to lead if they eat flaking paint chips or breathe in lead dust.



**Soil.** Lead particles from exterior lead-based paint, leaded gasoline, aviation fuel and lead industries can settle in soil and last for years. Children can be exposed to lead in soil by swallowing or breathing in lead-contaminated soil while playing. This soil can also get on shoes and clothes and be brought into the home or other locations where children spend time.



**Water.** Some water pipes, faucets, and plumbing fixtures may contain lead that can get into drinking water.



**Consumer products.** Lead can be found in toys, jewelry, antiques, and collectible items. Some glazes used on ceramics, china, and porcelain also contain lead, which might get into food.



**Imported foods and medicines.** Some candies, candy wrappers, spices, cosmetics, traditional medicines, and ceremonial or religious powders purchased or brought from outside the US contain lead.



**Jobs and hobbies.** Certain jobs and hobbies, such as stained-glass work, involve lead-based products and might result in parents or caregivers bringing lead into the home.

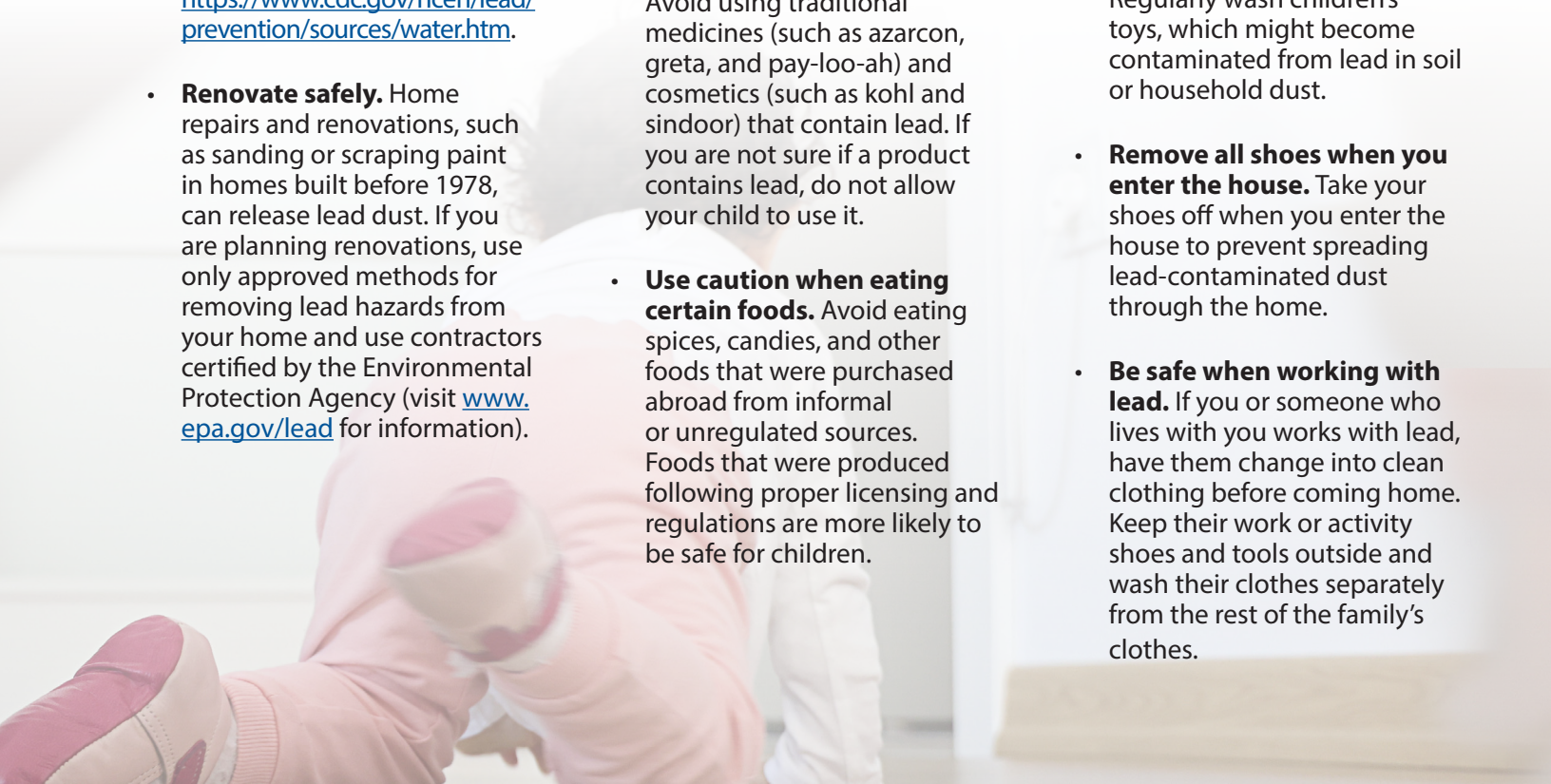




More information about the sources of lead can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/sources.htm>.



# Take steps to prevent lead exposure

There are many things you can do to protect your family from lead exposure.

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-  **Make your home lead-safe**
    - **Check your home.** If you live in a home built before 1978, have your home checked by a licensed lead inspector. If you rent, ask your landlord to have your home checked. Find a certified inspector or risk assessor at <https://www.epa.gov/lead>.
    - **Check your drinking water.** Contact your water provider to find out if you have a lead service line connected to your home. If there is lead in your tap water, take steps to reduce or eliminate exposure. More information can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/sources/water.htm>.
    - **Renovate safely.** Home repairs and renovations, such as sanding or scraping paint in homes built before 1978, can release lead dust. If you are planning renovations, use only approved methods for removing lead hazards from your home and use contractors certified by the Environmental Protection Agency (visit [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead) for information).
  -  **Make sure your products do not contain lead**
    - **Avoid certain children's products and toys.** Some toys, especially imported toys, antique toys, and toy jewelry may contain lead. You can find photos and descriptions of currently recalled toys at [www.cpsc.gov/recalls](http://www.cpsc.gov/recalls).
    - **Be safe in the kitchen.** Some imported or antique ceramics and pottery dishes are glazed with lead. This glaze might contaminate food when stored or prepared in these dishes.
    - **Avoid certain traditional medicines and cosmetics.** Avoid using traditional medicines (such as azarcon, greta, and pay-loo-ah) and cosmetics (such as kohl and sindoor) that contain lead. If you are not sure if a product contains lead, do not allow your child to use it.
    - **Use caution when eating certain foods.** Avoid eating spices, candies, and other foods that were purchased abroad from informal or unregulated sources. Foods that were produced following proper licensing and regulations are more likely to be safe for children.
  -  **Take everyday steps to stay healthy**
    - **Give your child healthy foods.** A balanced diet with foods that provide calcium, iron, and vitamin C may help keep lead out of the body. Many of these foods can be bought with food vouchers from food assistance programs. To learn more, call your child's pediatrician or visit [www.fns.usda.gov/wic](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic).
    - **Wash hands and toys.** Make sure your child washes his or her hands and face after playing outside or with pets that might have lead particles from soil on their fur or paws. Regularly wash children's toys, which might become contaminated from lead in soil or household dust.
    - **Remove all shoes when you enter the house.** Take your shoes off when you enter the house to prevent spreading lead-contaminated dust through the home.
    - **Be safe when working with lead.** If you or someone who lives with you works with lead, have them change into clean clothing before coming home. Keep their work or activity shoes and tools outside and wash their clothes separately from the rest of the family's clothes.

## Get your child tested for lead exposure

Talk to your healthcare provider about getting a blood lead test for your child. A blood test is the best way to determine if a child has been exposed to lead. Based on blood lead test results, healthcare providers can recommend follow-up actions and care.

For more information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/blood-lead-levels.htm>



# FLORIDA

## 2022 Healthy Housing Fact Sheet

Hazardous conditions found in unsafe housing can lead to lead poisoning, asthma and other respiratory illnesses, cancer, and unintentional injuries or death, resulting in poor school attendance and performance for children, missed workdays for parents, and the loss of loved ones for all. These hazards and their health impacts disproportionately affect communities of color and low-income communities, making the need for healthy housing a significant environmental and racial justice issue. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed, urgently, our need for safer, healthier, and affordable housing: The increased time spent at home and challenges to healthy housing service delivery have not only affected health negatively but also displayed—in sharp contrast—the longstanding crisis of inequitable access to quality housing and healthcare. In addition, climate change and the associated increase in both incidence and severity of extreme weather events are expanding the scope of policies contributing to healthy housing.



In Florida, **36% of children live in households with a high housing cost burden**, and 19% of children live in poverty.



**Approximately 37% of Florida housing was built prior to 1978** and may contain lead-based paint.



In 2020, **1,046 Florida children tested had an elevated blood lead level** (5 µg/dL or more).



Over **7% of adults** and almost **6% of children have current asthma** in Florida (2020).



In 2020, there were **over 62,000 emergency department visits and over 6,000 hospitalizations from asthma** in Florida, **costing over \$355.6 million and over \$322.3 million**, respectively.



**Unintentional falls are the leading cause of injury** for Floridians above the age of 65 and were responsible for **3,356 deaths in 2020**.



On average, **49 Floridians die annually from carbon monoxide exposure** (2015-2019).



**One in five Florida homes** has levels of **radon in their indoor air** above the EPA action level.

### CRITICAL FEDERAL FUNDING FOR HEALTHY HOUSING

A broad array of programs across the federal government support healthy housing activities and related efforts including increasing affordable housing, improving health outcomes, providing supportive services to families, improving energy efficiency, and identifying and addressing environmental hazards. Critical programs and services supporting crucial health and housing services in states and localities are outlined below; increasing appropriations allows new states to access funding and currently funded states to expand their programs.

#### Has FL received funding since 2020?

##### CDC's:

- ✓ **Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program**
- ✓ **National Asthma Control Program**
- ✓ **Environmental Health Tracking Network**

##### HUD's:

- ✓ **Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes**

##### EPA's:

- x **Lead Categorical Grants**
- ✓ **State Indoor Radon Grants**
- ✓ **Environmental Justice Grants**

##### DOE's:

- ✓ **Weatherization Assistance Program**

For more information on these programs and their impacts, as well as many others available to support healthy housing efforts, refer to **NCHH's Agency Fact Sheets**.

December 2022. For **references**, additional **state-specific** healthy homes information, and to learn how you can **engage your members of Congress** on these vital issues...

visit: <http://bit.ly/StatePro>

contact: [sgoodwin@nchh.org](mailto:sgoodwin@nchh.org)

# NCHH