

Dept. of Health Services: Office of Children's Mental Health focuses on preventing childhood lead poisoning

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Office of Children's Mental Health Director Linda Hall today announces the publication of a new fact sheet, [Preventing Childhood Lead Poisoning](#), and what parents, health care providers, and policymakers can do to make a difference.

Lead is a toxic metal that poisons the brain and body. There is no safe blood lead level (BLL), so even very small amounts are dangerous. Lead exposure mainly comes from paint, soil, and water. Lead exposure damages a child's developing brain, kidneys, and nervous system. It can cause learning disabilities, behavior problems, seizures, and in extreme cases, death.

Many children who are lead poisoned never show symptoms, resulting in it going undetected. Undiagnosed lead poisoning can cause a child's intellectual or behavioral issues to be misunderstood, misdiagnosed, or ignored.

"We know how to prevent lead poisoning and we must prioritize preventative measures to protect Wisconsin's children," Hall said. "Tragically, too many children in Wisconsin still suffer the consequences of lead poisoning. Even small amounts of lead can poison a child, leading to behavioral problems, mood disorders, learning disabilities, lower academic performance, and lifetime consequences. Pediatricians, policymakers and parents can all help prevent lead poisoning."

Lead poisoning is 100% preventable and treatable if detected early.

- Lead exposure is a problem in all of Wisconsin's 72 counties.
- Children are most at-risk of lead exposure if they live in neighborhoods with

older homes, lower housing values, and a higher proportion of rental properties

- Although rates of lead poisoning have declined over time in Wisconsin, there are dramatic differences for children of color, especially Black children who are poisoned more than three times the rate of White children.

What We Can Do

Parents

- Ask your health care provider about lead testing.
- Check and test your home for lead if you live in a home built before 1978.

Health Care Providers

- Ensure children ages 0-6 receive age-appropriate lead tests, especially children living in high-risk areas.
- Immediately connect parents of children with elevated BLL to services to prevent further exposure and for treatment.

Policymakers

- Repeal Wisconsin law that blocks local rental licensing and certification programs and restricts the fees collected to recoup programs costs.
- Increase funding for lead poisoning prevention efforts, particularly home lead abatement programs and lead service line replacement. Target funds to communities with the highest risk and rates of poisoning.
- Create a grant program for in-home childcare providers, who care for a third of all infants, to remediate lead hazards in their childcare setting.
- Make blood lead level tests for Wisconsin children free regardless of insurance coverage.

See the [complete fact sheet](#).

See [previous fact sheets](#).