

# Lead Poisoning & Screening For Lead

McKenzie Pediatrics (April 2000)

## How Common Is Lead Poisoning In Children?

It is estimated that 1 in 10 American children have a blood lead level (BLL) elevated enough to potentially cause long-term problems. The problem is more often seen in urban areas, and children living in Lane County have a much lower risk than seen nationally.

## What Are The Risk Factors For Lead In My Child's Environment?

### \*\* Lead-Based Paint

- most houses built before 1978 contain lead-based paint...any recently remodeling of such houses carries a risk for lead dust
- houses built prior to 1950 are at highest risk for peeling paint, and for having lead dust within and surrounding the house
- federal law, as of 1995, requires owner of any house built before 1978 to disclose presence of lead-paint, or pay for inspection/testing
- in thinking about whether your child has been at risk for lead-exposure, don't forget to think about *all* the houses your child has lived in!

### \*\* Sibling or Close Playmate With History Of Lead Poisoning

### \*\* History Of Pica (Ingestion Of Soil, Rocks...)

- especially if house built before 1978, as rainwater leaching of exterior paint into soil around house can increase the exposure to lead (and, of course, a house built prior to 1978 with chipping exterior paint has an even higher risk!)

### \*\* Accidental Ingestion Of Lead-Containing Objects

- Lead Fishing Weights, Lead Shot, Curtain Weights, Lead Jewelry, Imported Crayons

### \*\* Parent Hobbies Involving Lead Products

- Stained Glass, Home Welding, Home Car or Battery Repair, Home Lead Jewelry Making, Lead-Based Artist Paints, Pottery Glazing (Or Imported Ceramics)

### \*\* Close Proximity To Lead-Producing Industry

- Glass Manufacturing, Battery Manufacturing, Smelters, Brass & Copper Manufacturing, Large Car & Battery Repair Shop

## What Are The Effects Of High Blood Lead?

On the fetus, the effects of a high blood lead level in the mother increases the chance of prematurity, stillbirth, and miscarriages. In a child, an elevated BLL can lead to:

Reduced IQ	Increased Developmental Delay	Chronic Appetite Loss
Anemia	Reduced Skeletal Growth	Chronic Constipation
Seizures	Nerve Disorders	Intestinal Cramping

### **How Is A Blood Lead Level Checked?**

If your child meets a risk factor for lead exposure, the first test will be a **hemoglobin** test here in the office, obtained by a fingerstick. A child who *does not* have anemia is very unlikely to have lead poisoning. If your child is anemic, and there is also a risk factor for lead exposure, we will set up for your child to have their blood drawn at a lab for a blood lead level (BLL). A normal level is "**less than 5**".

### **What If My Child's BLL Is High?**

This is a complicated question. For a BLL 5-19, environmental changes will be discussed, and the BLL will be rechecked every 3 months until (hopefully) normal. Level 20 or higher require medical therapy, which would be discussed at that time.