

Standard of Care Guidelines for Blood Lead Testing

Anticipatory guidance

At each periodic assessment from 6 months to 6 years old, health care providers should inform the parent/guardian about:

- The risks and effects of childhood lead exposure
- The recommendation to enroll children in Medi-Cal to receive blood lead tests
- How children who are not tested are at risk for high levels of lead in their blood

Assessment

- Ask if the child lives in or spends a significant amount of time in a building built before 1978 that has peeling or chipped paint or has been recently remodeled
 - Test if the answer is “yes” or “don’t know”
- Test if a change in circumstances has put the child at risk for lead exposure

Testing

- **Routine testing:** Test all children in publicly supported programs (Medi-Cal/WIC/CHDP) at 12 months *and* 24 months of age
- **Catch up testing:** Test all children 24 months to 6 years old who are in a publicly supported program but were not tested at 12 and 24 months old
- **Other indications for a blood lead test:**
 - Parental request (if clinically appropriate)
 - Sibling, playmate or other close contact has an increased blood lead level
 - Suspected lead exposure
 - History of living in or visiting a country with high levels of environmental lead

Refugee care: recommended post-arrival lead screening

- **Initial lead exposure screening with blood test**
 - All refugee infants and children under 16 years of age
 - Refugee adolescents over 16 years of age if there is suspicion of lead exposure or clinical signs/symptoms of lead exposure are present
 - All pregnant and lactating adolescents
- **Follow-up with blood test, 2-6 months after initial testing**
 - All infants and children under 6 years of age regardless of initial screening result
 - Refugee children and adolescents 7-16 years of age who had BLLs at or above 3.5 ug/dL¹, and any child over 7 years old who has a risk factor regardless of initial screening result
 - Pregnant or lactating adolescents

¹State of California: Health and Human Services Agency, Department of Health Care Services. APL 20-016: Blood Lead Screening of Young Children Provider Update. November 2, 2020.

<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/Documents/MMCDAPLsandPolicyLetters/APL2020/APL20-016.pdf>

This APL follows the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for refugee care, which includes testing for BLLs at or above 3.5 ug/dL as opposed to the California state guideline of 5 ug/dL.