

**COUNTY OF**



**ALLEGHENY**

**RICH FITZGERALD**  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

## **UNIVERSAL BLOOD LEAD LEVEL TESTING REGULATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What is the universal blood lead level testing regulation?**

- The universal blood lead level testing regulation mandates that all children in Allegheny County be tested for lead exposure between 9 and 12 months of age and again at 24 months.

### **When does the universal blood lead level regulation go into effect?**

- The regulation goes into effect on January 1, 2018.

### **Which children in Allegheny County must be tested?**

- The regulation applies to all children in Allegheny County under the age of 6.

### **What should parents do?**

- Parents should have their children's blood lead levels tested at the age of 9 to 12 months and again at 24 months.

### **Where can parents have their child's blood lead level tested?**

- Parents should request the testing from their child's pediatric provider or family doctor.
- Beginning in 2018, ACHD facilities will be offering testing for un- or underinsured families. Please call 412-687-ACHD (2243) for more information.

### **What type of test will be used?**

- The test will either be a venous test (blood drawn from the arm) or capillary test (blood drawn by a "finger stick").

### **Can children be tested at a later age?**

- Yes. Children who are not tested before 24 months old should be tested before the age of 6 or entry into kindergarten, whichever is sooner.

### **Can parents opt out of having their child's blood lead level tested?**

- Yes, parents who object in writing on religious grounds or on the basis of a strong moral or ethical conviction similar to a religious belief can opt out of blood testing.



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KAREN HACKER, MD, MPH, DIRECTOR  
**ALLEGHENY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
542 FOURTH AVENUE • PITTSBURGH, PA 15219  
PHONE (412) 687-ACHD (2243) • FAX (412) 578-8325 • [WWW.ACHD.NET](http://WWW.ACHD.NET)

**How do parents opt out?**

- Parents should put their objection in writing by sending a letter to the child's pediatric provider and the school. The letter should state the reasons for opting out of having their child's blood lead level tested.

**What if my child has a health condition preventing blood lead level testing?**

- Children are not required to have a blood lead level test if a health care practitioner determines that blood lead level testing may be harmful to the health of the child.
- When the health care practitioner determines that blood lead level testing is no longer harmful to the health of the child, the child should have their blood lead level tested according to the regulation's schedule or the catch-up provision.

**What if my child does not have health insurance?**

- Beginning in 2018, ACHD will offer free testing for un- or underinsured children. The tests will be conducted at the Allegheny County Health Department's Immunization Clinic and select WIC locations. Please call 412-687-ACHD (2243) for more information.

**Will my child be excluded from enrolling in school if they do not have their blood lead level tested?**

- No, children who do not have their blood lead level tested will not be excluded from enrolling in school.

**I am a pediatric provider. What should I do to comply with the regulation?**

- You should inform parents of the blood lead level testing requirement.
- You should conduct the test on children at approximately 9 to 12 months of age and again at approximately 24 months of age.
- Tests should be done by venipuncture or by capillary blood sampling.
- Any capillary test that is  $\geq 5\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  must be confirmed with a venipuncture result.
- Testing may be delayed if it is not possible to draw a sufficient blood sample.
- If a child has not had their blood lead level tested by the age of 24 months, testing should be done as soon as possible but before the age of 6 or entry into kindergarten, whichever is sooner.
- Parents may refuse the test if they object on religious or moral grounds.
- You should get the objection in writing and add it to the child's medical record.
- We urge pediatric providers to provide documentation of lead testing on school physical forms.

## **What do schools have to do to comply with the regulation?**

Schools in Allegheny County must:

- Tell parents that children should have their blood lead level tested by the time they are enrolled.
- Confirm the blood lead level testing status of each child prior to entering kindergarten.
- Maintain a record of blood lead level testing for each child enrolled in kindergarten.
- Annually report blood lead level testing data to the ACHD.
- Give written notice of the testing requirements to parents who have not had their child's blood lead level tested in accordance with the regulation.

## **My child will be entering kindergarten in the 2018-2019 school year and has not yet had their blood lead level tested. Will they need to have their blood lead level tested before entering kindergarten?**

- Yes. All children are required to have their blood lead level tested prior to entry into kindergarten or before they are 6 years old, whichever is sooner.

## **What should I do if my child has elevated blood lead levels?**

- Your pediatric provider will advise you of the appropriate medical response. The response depends on the type of test administered (capillary vs. venous) and how much lead your child has in their blood.
- Any capillary test that is  $\geq 5\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  must be confirmed with a venipuncture result.
- If your child has a confirmed blood lead level equal to or greater than  $10\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ , the ACHD will perform an investigation to determine the source of your child's lead exposure. Please call the Housing and Community Environment Program for more information at **412-350-4046**.

## **How can I prevent my child from being exposed to lead?**

### ***If you live in home built before 1978:***

- Keep your child away from defective, chipping, or peeling paint.
- Household dust can contain microscopic particles of lead. Dry brooming and dry dusting simply spread the dust to other areas.
- Instead of using a dry broom, dry dust rag, or duster to clean, use a damp rag or wet mop, at least weekly, to clean all hard-horizontal surfaces that collect dust, like window sills and floors, and especially in areas where children play or spend time.
- Instead of a regular vacuum cleaner use a vacuum cleaner with HEPA filter.
- Wash your child's toys and hands frequently, and especially wash their hands before eating.
- Do not allow your child to mouth window sills or other painted or varnished surfaces.

***To minimize possible exposure to lead from soil:***

- Do not let children play in abandoned homes, or on empty lots with bare soil or where old wood or plaster is on the ground.
- Plant grass or cover bare soil with mulch, or wood chips, if possible.

***To minimize possible exposure to lead in water:***

- For those residents served by water systems that have exceeded the Lead and Copper Rule action level for lead, and residents with known lead pipes in any community, we recommend that their water be tested and that they utilize simple solutions such as use of NSF filters or bottled water, particularly for use in infant formula. Additional information, and CDC guidelines, can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm>. Residents may also contact their water system for information.
- Have your water tested for lead and use a NSF filter approved for removing lead or use bottled water.
- Draw drinking water from cold faucet only. If water stands for more than a few hours, run each cold-water faucet for 2 to 3 minutes before using.

***To minimize possible exposure if you work with lead or are having work done on your home:***

- If you work with lead, shower and change your clothes before going home. Wash work clothes separate from those of other family members.
- Keep children away from older buildings that are being renovated or painted.
- When renovating or repairing your home, hire an EPA lead-certified renovator.
- Go to the EPA web site at [www.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-lead-your-home](http://www.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-lead-your-home) and read the booklet entitled Protect Your Family.

**Additional recommendations can be found at: [www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/)**

**For more information, contact your family physician, or:**

Allegheny County Health Department  
Housing and Community Environment Program  
3190 Sassafras Way, Pittsburgh, PA.  
(412) 350-4046

[www.achd.net/housing/index.html](http://www.achd.net/housing/index.html)