



ALEXANDRIA HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Health Director

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PRACTICE NAME

ADDRESS

Alexandria, VA **ZIP**

RE: Lead – Prevention, Testing, Responding

Dear Partner in Health,

I am sending this to provide you and your staff information about lead prevention, updates on lead testing, and reminders of how you should respond to elevated blood levels in your patients.

IMPACT

As you know, a high blood lead level can be very serious and result in negative health sequelae. While lead can adversely impact almost every organ and system in the body, the main target for lead toxicity is the nervous system. Lead can affect both adults and children, but children are particularly vulnerable to even very low levels of lead. No safe blood lead level in children has been identified. A child with an elevated blood level may seem healthy, but an elevated blood lead level can cause serious problems that are not seen until later. Problems include reading and learning problems, damage to hearing, restricted growth, behavioral problems, and even permanent neurologic damage.

PREVENTION

Tell ALL families that they can reduce the risk of lead exposure by the following measures:

- Avoid exposure to sources of lead
 - Give the enclosed handout "Brief Overview on Lead" *
 - Give the enclosed handout "CDC-AHD Blood Lead Levels in Children"
- Prevent children from chewing or mouthing surfaces (e.g. walls, toys) that may have been painted with lead-based paint
- If the home contains lead-based paint, parents should wash their children's hands and faces often to remove dusts and soil; they should regularly clean the house of dust
- If parents are uncertain about the plumbing in their house, they should flush the water for several minutes, or until it changes temperature, before using it for drinking or cooking; hot water from the tap should not be used for cooking or for mixing baby formula (instead, heat the cold water from the tap on the stove or in the microwave)
- Some paints and pigments used in some hair coloring and make-up contain lead (an example is eyeliner known as kohl). Keep these products away from children. Parents who use these products should be given the handout "Kohl Kajal Surma FAQ" * in their preferred language.

* These handouts, and other information, are available at alexandriava.gov/92182

Remember: there is no "safe" blood lead level.

TESTING – The protocol established by the Code of Virginia (following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations) requires testing as follows:

- All children at 12 months of age
- All children at 24 months
- Children age 2-6 years if they meet any of the following criteria:
 - Have never been tested for lead before
 - Previously had an elevated blood lead level, but did not have a subsequent test demonstrating that it is no longer elevated
 - Receive public assistance due to low income status (e.g. Medicaid or WIC Nutrition Services)
 - Live in a building or frequently visit a house built before 1950
 - Visit a house or apartment built before 1978 that has recently been remodeled
 - Have a sibling or playmate who has or had an elevated blood lead level

The most accurate blood lead levels are through venous samples. Please call your laboratory if you have questions about the processes and logistics for testing lead in blood.

HOW YOU SHOULD RESPOND – Treatment, and subsequent follow-up, depends on the level:

LEVEL	HEALTHCARE PROVIDER’S ACTIONS	NOTES
70+	Medical Emergency requiring immediate hospitalization and inpatient chelation therapy	Medical evaluation and treatment
20-69	Urgent Medical Attention needed; may require chelation therapy	Check for iron deficiency anemia
10-19	Follow-up Medical Visit within 2-4 weeks; evaluate and educate; retest blood lead level	Consult health department (do not delay the above)
1-10	Counsel on risk reduction and healthful nutrition; consider retest as indicated	Consult health department as needed

There is no “safe” blood lead level. When Alexandria Health Department (AHD) receives notice of an elevated blood lead level ≥ 10 , a Public Health Nurse (PHN) is assigned to the family. The PHN helps identify possible sources of lead exposure, sometimes along with the AHD Environmental Health Division; the PHN educates the family on problems with lead, exposure avoidance, and the importance of their doctor visits.

Good nutrition is an important part of reducing elevated lead levels. AHD’s WIC Nutrition Program may be able to help via assessments, counseling, and vouchers for nutritious food. Call 703.746.4998 for more information, including eligibility requirements and enrollment steps.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional information for you and parents can be found at

- AHD’s website (links to reliable sources): alexandriava.gov/92182
- VDH Lead Poisoning Prevention: www.vdh.virginia.gov/leadsafe/
- CDC – Information for Parents: www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/parents.htm

If you have any questions or concerns about lead, please contact Public Health Nurse Supervisor Maritza Rosa at 703.746.4823. If you’d like to discuss this or other public health matters with me, please contact me at stephen.haering@vdh.virginia.gov, or 703.746.4956.

Thank you for all you do to protect and promote health and well-being for all Alexandrians.

Sincerely,

Stephen A. Haering, MD, MPH, FACPM
Health Director