



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 25, 2026

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KEY POINTS FOR MEDIA:

- Expansion is the culmination of years-long effort to identify children at risk of lead exposure
- There is no safe level of lead in the blood; lead can cause developmental, behavioral, and learning difficulties
- Childhood testing means earlier intervention, improved chances of better outcomes

All Children Across Illinois to Receive Blood Lead Testing

Effective July 1, all Illinois ZIP codes will be covered under state law calling for precautionary testing to ensure children are not harmed by exposure to lead

SPRINGFIELD – Today, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced universal childhood blood lead testing will take effect July 1, 2026, the culmination of a years-long effort to expand the number of children who receive such testing. Through the Childhood Lead Program, IDPH identifies children who have been exposed to lead and who may need health interventions to address its effects.

“There is no safe level of lead in the blood,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “Through our Childhood Lead Program, IDPH has identified thousands of children who have been exposed to lead, allowing for early intervention to address negative health effects and implementation of efforts to limit further exposure. With this move to universal childhood blood lead testing, IDPH is taking another step towards protecting the health and safety of Illinois’ youngest residents.”

Previously, Illinois lead testing requirements applied to children living in “high-risk ZIP codes.” Under the new standard that takes effect on July 1, all Illinois children are to be tested automatically at 12 and 24 months. All children six years of age and younger are required to be assessed for lead exposure through the use of a questionnaire administered by a health care provider.

Under Illinois law, blood tests that come back with confirmed lead levels in excess of 3.5 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL) require a public health intervention. This includes a home inspection to determine the source of the lead contamination. If lead is found, the inspector works with the resident to remove the sources of lead. In addition, a public health nurse will visit and educate the family on ways to protect children from the harmful effects of lead.

Lead exposure can lead to damage to the brain and nervous system, slowed growth and developmental, behavioral and learning difficulties, among other challenges. More information on lead exposure can be found at [Lead Poisoning Prevention](#).

Childhood lead testing is just one of the ways that IDPH protects and promotes the health of children. Other Department initiatives include:

- Providing guidance on immunizations for children and adolescents, and supporting access to those immunizations through the Vaccines for Children program
- Newborn screening, which allows for early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of more than 50 different disorders
- Funding to support community-based promotion of infant safe sleep practices
- Support for hotlines and warmlines to provide clinicians with essential information that help them care for infants exposed to HIV or congenital syphilis
- Providing monitoring, support, and training for Illinois's certified school health centers
- Evaluation of school-based oral health programs on behalf of the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS)
- Supporting the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership and fortifying community networks for children's behavioral health care.

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