

Childhood Lead Poisoning in Denver

Fighting Childhood Lead Poisoning

Lead poisoning has been identified as the number one preventable environmental health threat to children in the United States. The leading cause of childhood lead poisoning in the U.S. today is the ingestion of lead-based paint and the associated contaminated dust and soil found in, or around, older houses. The impact of childhood lead poisoning has been documented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Since lead poisoning often occurs with no obvious symptoms, it frequently goes unrecognized. Children younger than the age of six are most at risk of becoming lead poisoned. Children are growing and their brains are developing rapidly; even low levels of lead can potentially cause permanent brain and nervous system damage, learning and behavioral problems, and result in lower IQ.

Other symptoms of lead poisoning may include:

- Headaches.
- Stomach aches.
- Nausea.
- Tiredness.
- Irritability.

There have been some rare cases of lead poisoning causing convulsions, coma and even death.

A blood test is the only way to know if your child is lead poisoned. Most children with lead poisoning do not look or act sick and the symptoms are not particularly obvious. Routine screening for lead exposure is conducted at well child checks at 12 and 24 months. Ask your doctor or health care provider about a blood lead test if you think your child may be at risk.

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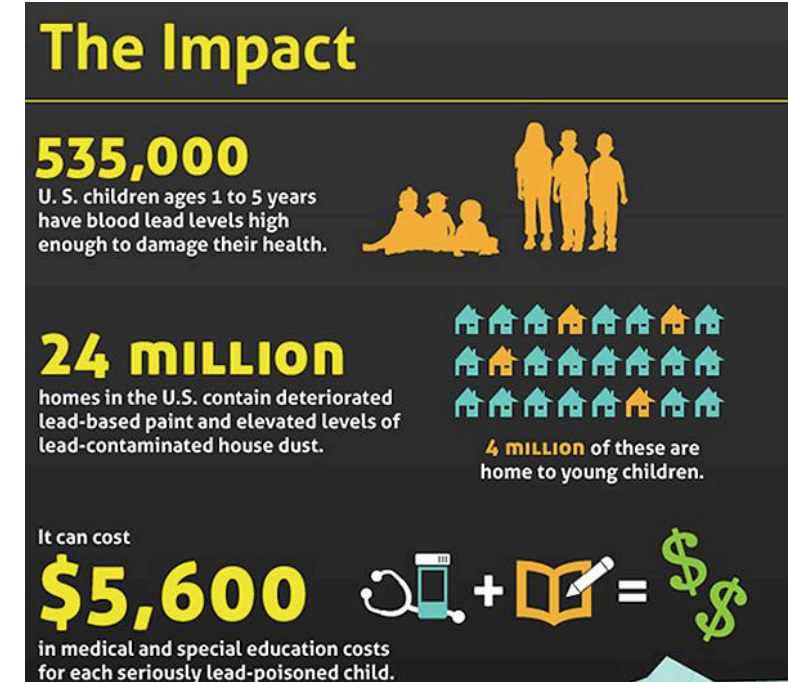
105 unique individuals have been reported in 2016 with at least one test with elevated blood lead levels.*

260 such individuals were identified in 2013-14.*

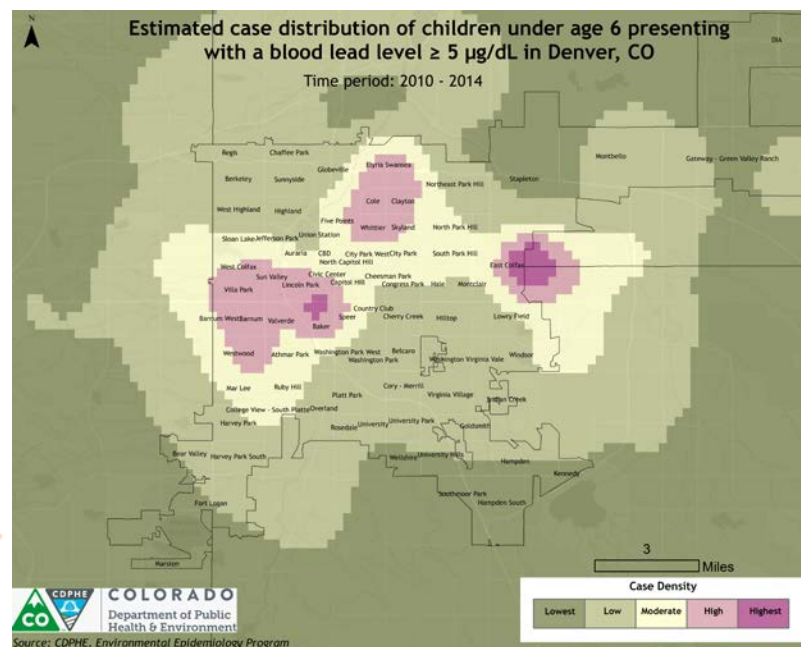
Case Distribution in Denver

Areas with high concentration of childhood lead poisoning tends to have more pre-1978 homes. Low income communities are disproportionately affected.

*An elevated test doesn't necessarily represent a confirmed case of childhood lead poisoning.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Investigation and Response

The [Public Health Inspections Division of Denver Environmental Health](#) is responsible for responding to child lead poisoning cases in Denver.

- For children with confirmed blood lead levels at, or **more than, 5 micrograms of lead per deciliter**, an investigation occurs to locate the source of lead exposure.
- Most cases are related to a child having contact with deteriorated lead-based paint or accompanying dust and soil.
- Denver Environmental Health (DEH) conducts environmental assessment to identify potential causes. Family members are interviewed and household materials are sampled to identify contributors to elevated lead levels.


Building a Lead Poisoning Free Future

To raise awareness of the consequences of lead poisoning among parents and pregnant women who live in homes built before 1978, DEH participated in [National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week](#) October 23-29.

This year's theme, "Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future," underscored the importance of testing your home and drinking water, and having your child tested to prevent the serious health consequences of lead poisoning.




Exposure to lead can seriously harm a child's health.



Damage to the brain and nervous system Slowed growth and development Learning and behavior problems Hearing and speech problems

This can cause:

- Lower IQ
- Decreased ability to pay attention
- Underperformance at school



What are we doing?

- **Inspect** – DEH offers free inspections of homes built before 1978 for families with children.
- **Respond** – If needed, DEH will take proper action to ensure future safety.
- **Educate** – Inform public about risks and prevention.

Call: (720) 865-5401, or visit denvergov.org/leadsafety

What can you do?

- **Monitor** - Pay attention to areas susceptible to deterioration (wood, windows and doors).
- **Clean** floors and windowsills with soap and water.
- **Practice good hygiene** - Wash children's hands regularly.
- **Ensure your child is screened** during routine well child checks.