



THE LEAD POISONING TREATMENT AND PREVENTION PROGRAM

Protecting Families from Exposures to Lead



ABOUT US

At Montefiore, we are doing more to keep families in our community healthy and safe. The Lead Poisoning Treatment and Prevention Program at Children's Hospital at Montefiore (CHAM) is a highly structured and multidisciplinary program that provides medical treatment, educational resources, research and awareness training on the prevention and management of lead poisoning to families in New York.

CHAM'S LEAD POISONING AND PREVENTION PROGRAM HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS A NATIONAL MODEL BECAUSE OF ITS QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS.

CHAM's Lead Poisoning and Prevention Program is the oldest and most comprehensive of its kind in the United States, and the program has been designated as a national model because of its quality and effectiveness.

The staff of the Lead Program includes:

- Director of the Program and the Lead Clinic (Professor of Pediatrics at Albert Einstein College of Medicine)
- Program Administrator
- Nurse Practitioner
- Social Worker
- Environmental Specialist
- Field Coordinator



WHAT IS LEAD POISONING?

Lead poisoning is a serious and potentially fatal condition caused by the exposure and ingestion of too much lead. Lead can be found in lead-based paints, toys, cosmetics, water and food, among other things. Infants and children under the age of 6 are more likely to eat items containing lead. Furthermore, they are particularly vulnerable to the effects of lead because their bodies and brains are in a period of rapid development.

DANGERS OF LEAD POISONING

There is no safe level of lead in the blood of children. The main source of lead found in children's blood is from small particles of leaded paint embedded in household dust in buildings built before 1960, when leaded paint for residential homes was widely used.

This lead-contaminated household dust adheres to hands, skin, hair, clothes and toys. Then, through normal hand-to-mouth activity, this dust is ingested, leading to elevations in a child's blood lead level.

The current definition of childhood lead poisoning, as of January 1, 2012, is a blood lead level greater than or equal to 5 ug/dL. Lead's primary adverse health impact is on the developing brain, where it poisons brain structures and brain functions. Specifically, these effects may include deficits or impairments in communication, fine motor skills, impulse control, memory, learning, attention, visual-spatial skills, planning, organization, cognitive flexibility, abstract thinking and being able to sit, listen and learn in school. If these impairments are present, uncovered by a comprehensive neuropsychological assessment, they may not be reversible. These are obviously necessary skills for success in school and productivity in the workplace. However, these adverse outcomes of childhood lead poisoning on intellectual functioning may not become apparent until a child reaches school age, when academic demands become more competitive.

Parents should take the necessary precautions to have children tested for lead, to learn how to identify the signs of potential lead poisoning and to access available resources for treatment help.

WHAT IS BLOOD LEAD TESTING?

The results of a blood lead test yield data that define the extent of lead exposure over the past several weeks to months, after which any lead not excreted is stored mainly in the patient's bone. In New York State, a blood lead test at 12 and 24 months is mandated. If a child is considered to be at high risk for excessive exposure to lead, a periodic blood lead test is mandated in New York State from 6 months to 6 years of age.

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY

If your child has lead poisoning, it is very likely that he or she will not have any symptoms that you can recognize. Likewise, your child's pediatrician will probably not see detectable signs. As a parent, you may notice developmental delays, such as speech delay and/or hyperactivity. With severe lead poisoning, your child may have decreased appetite, abdominal pain and constipation. At even higher levels, your child may become sleepy and lethargic. If so, this is a medical emergency.

NOTE THAT WHENEVER YOUR CHILD IS TESTED FOR LEAD, IT IS CRITICAL FOR YOU TO OBTAIN THE EXACT RESULT AS A NUMBER.

Note that whenever your child is tested for lead, it is critical for you to obtain the exact result as a number—not a statement by your pediatrician, such as “not to worry” or “it is normal.”

CHECK YOUR HOME

It's important to check your home for lead paint. Learn the year your home was built by using the internet. Insert your address in the search bar and look up your home on the webpage that shows your address. If your home environment was built before 1960, it is likely that your home contains lead-based paint. If so, inform your pediatrician immediately, because your children are considered to be at high risk for developing lead poisoning and must be evaluated promptly.

Report any peeling paint or apartment leaks to your pediatrician and your local housing department. In New York City, call the 3-1-1 hotline.

SUPPORT SERVICES

CHAM's Lead Poisoning Treatment and Prevention Program is leading the charge to do more to prevent lead poisoning in our community. We provide services to address all aspects of lead poisoning, including:

A REFERRAL CENTER

The referral center was designed for the treatment and management of children who have blood lead levels equal to or greater than 5 ug/dL. This treatment is provided by an experienced staff that includes a professor of pediatrics who has spent most of his career in the treatment of this disease, a nurse practitioner, a social worker, an environmental specialist, a field coordinator and laboratory technicians who carry out blood analyses in CHAM's Lead Laboratory.

THE SAFE HOUSE

The Safe House for Lead Poisoning Prevention provides families with comfort, support and expert healthcare under one roof. The temporary residence has six apartments in the same building as the program's offices, and it is designed to assist families while lead paint repairs are being carried out in their home. Because lead repair work may release additional lead dust, staying in the Safe House during the work removes the family from a potentially hazardous setting.

The Safe House is located in the northwest Bronx, near Children's Hospital at Montefiore. It is open to families from the downstate New York region.

BLOOD LEAD TESTING

Laboratory technicians carry out about 40,000 blood lead tests annually. The turnaround time for laboratory results is 48 hours; for Thursday-morning clinic patients, the results are available Thursday afternoon. The laboratory instrumentation includes two Perkin-Elmer A-600 graphite furnace atomic absorption spectrophotometers.

PATIENT CARE

Together, our nurse practitioner and clinical director provide direct patient care at our Thursday-morning Lead Clinic, and in the hospital when a child is admitted with a very high lead level requiring chelation therapy. The nurse practitioner is also responsible for providing follow-up information on blood lead levels to the families and ongoing scheduling of patient referrals.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

We provide community outreach and education services to organizations, including churches, parent-teacher associations, Head Start programs, precinct community councils, community boards, pediatric clinics, hospitals, pediatricians and obstetricians. Our outreach partners are the Pratt Area Community Council (IMPACCT Brooklyn), based in Brooklyn, and Nos Quedamos, based in the Bronx.

COORDINATION ASSISTANCE FOR APARTMENT REPAIRS

Our environmental specialist interacts with clinic families and the New York area departments of health to bring about apartment repairs involving lead-based paint removal expeditiously. This entails close collaboration with the family and the departments of health. The immediate goal is to remove the child from the apartment during the potentially dangerous period of renovation and repair.

SOCIAL WORKER TO ASSIST FAMILIES

The social worker is responsible for assisting clinic families with any family-related issues, such as enrolling affected children in early intervention programs or assisting the environmentalist in finding alternative housing while their home is made lead safe. The social worker is also responsible for providing information to families about the Lead Safe House, implementing the actual move into the Lead Safe House and dealing with family needs during their stay.

LEAD POISONING PREVENTION RESEARCH

The lead poisoning prevention research is aimed at empowering parents to identify lead-based paint hazards in their homes before their children become poisoned. We recently completed a project to determine if a “parent-as-user” kit could be developed to enable parents to collect dust from floors and window sills to determine if lead is present. These dust wipes, collected in homes under the supervision of Environmental Protection Agency-certified dust collectors from our partner organizations such as Pratt, were sent for laboratory analyses in an addressed mailer contained in the kit. The trial showed that parents can successfully use this kit to get accurate results. The study also taught them what to do with those results. For example, if the results were elevated, parents were advised to phone New York City’s 3-1-1 hotline for an apartment inspection and to have their children tested for lead.

LEAD POISONING PREVENTION RESEARCH IS AIMED AT EMPOWERING PARENTS TO IDENTIFY LEAD-BASED PAINT HAZARDS IN THEIR HOMES BEFORE THEIR CHILDREN BECOME POISONED.

COORDINATION OF SERVICES ACROSS THE REGION

The regional field coordinator’s duties extend to the 12 outlying counties in the Hudson Valley, metropolitan New York City and Long Island. These counties constitute the Lead Program’s regional responsibility. Services to the region include providing education to area pediatric healthcare providers and local lead programs, as well as scheduling Grand Rounds presentations at area hospitals. The presentations are focused on childhood lead poisoning and management of elevated blood lead levels in pregnant women. There is frequent regional problem-solving of clinical issues in consultation with the Lead Program’s clinicians. Additionally, the field coordinator organizes planning and implementation of three region-wide professional conferences annually.



PROGRAM HISTORY

Founded in 1972 by pediatrician and researcher John F. Rosen, MD, CHAM’s Lead Poisoning Prevention and Treatment Program is the oldest and most comprehensive of its kind in the United States. Our team includes distinguished professionals in the areas of medicine, research, social services, environmental investigation and public advocacy. An analytical blood lead laboratory supports the work of the team.

The program model has been nationally recognized. In 1993, the lead program became home to one of the three Regional Lead Resource Centers for lead poisoning, funded by the New York State Department of Health.

Our innovative lead research helps keep the program on the cutting edge. We have partnered with government agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to work on clinical research that has impacted the management of lead poisoning in children and pregnant women.

CHAM’S LEAD POISONING PREVENTION AND TREATMENT PROGRAM IS THE OLDEST AND MOST COMPREHENSIVE OF ITS KIND IN THE UNITED STATES.

CONTACT US



To schedule an appointment, call **718-547-2789** or email **leadprogram@montefiore.org**.

Discover more about the Lead Poisoning Prevention and Treatment Program at **cham.org/leadprogram**.

LOCATION

The Safe House for Lead Poisoning Prevention

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MAILING ADDRESS

The Safe House for Lead Poisoning Prevention

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