

Frequently Asked Questions

General Information: Lead-Safe Housing Policies and Programs September 2021

City of Lancaster, PA

Why is it important to prevent childhood exposure to lead-based paint hazards?

There is no safe level of lead exposure in children. Exposure to lead among children can seriously harm a child's health and can cause permanent, lifelong damage, including lower IQ, decreased ability to pay attention, underperformance in school, and disruptive behavior. The negative health effects of lead have no cure and are not reversible. Exposure to lead can cause adverse effects such as:

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

Who are most at risk of lead poisoning?

Children less than six years old are at a higher risk of lead exposure because their bodies are still developing, and they are growing so rapidly. Young children also tend to put their hands, or other objects, that may be contaminated with lead dust, into their mouths. Children less than 2 years old are at greatest risk for complications and permanent damage because this is during the early stages of development.

Children who live in households at or below the federal poverty level and those who live in housing built before 1978 are at the greatest risk of lead exposure. Also, communities of color are at a higher risk of lead exposure because they may not have access to safe, affordable housing or face discrimination when trying to find a safe, healthy place to live. This is called housing inequity, and it puts black and brown children at a greater risk of exposure to lead (CDC).

Do children with lead poisoning have symptoms?

Children with lead poisoning often have no symptoms. The only way to tell is to have your child tested. A child can be poisoned and show no outward signs. When there are symptoms, they can include diarrhea, stomach cramps, lethargy, vomiting, or seizures in some severe cases. Behavioral issues and developmental delays may also be observed among children with lead poisoning.

Is childhood lead poisoning common in Lancaster City?

According to most recent surveillance report on Childhood Lead Poisoning in PA (2019 data made available in 2021), Lancaster City data shows that:

- Over 8% of children who were tested in 2019 were confirmed to have an elevated blood lead level (EBLL) greater than 5 µg/dL (CDC threshold for EBLL)
 - 1054 children were tested for lead poisoning between age 0-71 months
 - 94 confirmed EBLL cases (47 were among those between 0-23 months)
- About 1/3 of children between 0-23 months and 1/5 between 0-71 months are tested – because not all children are being tested, we are only seeing a snapshot of the true number of EBLL cases occurring in our City
- Black and Latinx children are 2-3 times more likely to have an elevated blood lead level compared to white children

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What is the City doing to prevent childhood lead poisoning?

The City's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention strategy has 4 main pillars

- Educating the Community About How to Prevent Lead Poisoning
- Housing Revitalization Programs to Mitigate Lead Hazards in the Community
- Proactive Policy Development that Promotes Safe and Healthy Housing
- Elevated Blood Lead Level (EBLL) Case Response

Why expand the lead safety ordinance to include all rental units?

- We believe ALL tenants have the right to a safe and healthy home for themselves, their families, and visitors.
- We know that Lancaster City continues to be among the top ten cities in Pennsylvania with the highest rates of childhood lead poisoning.
- We have an unprecedented opportunity to address lead poisoning in Lancaster City through expanded funding. More than \$11 million in Housing and Urban Development funds have been awarded to mitigate lead in the City, and Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health has allocated \$50 million to mitigate lead in homes across Lancaster County.

How long are lead-safe certifications valid for?

Lead-safe certificates are valid for 2 years. Lead-safe certification will be required prior to the issuance of all new rental licenses starting January 1, 2022, and for all rental license renewals starting January 1, 2023.

What do I do if I think there is lead in my home?

If you are a parent, ask your physician about having your child tested for lead. If you suspect lead in your home, prevent young children from being exposed to potential lead paint chips and dust and have the property tested for lead hazards by a licensed technician/risk assessor. If you are a landlord, have your property tested for lead, remediate any lead hazards, and obtain and maintain lead-safe certification.

Is there funding available to remove lead hazards from my home?

The City offers several programs aimed at promoting lead-safe and healthy housing. This includes the Lead Hazard Control Program, Healthy Homes Program, and Critical Repair Program. Funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), these programs provide grants and loans to low to moderate income households to remediate lead hazards and make other improvements to improve the health and safety of the home.

Specifically, the City was awarded 9.7 million dollars from HUD's High Impact Neighborhoods Lead Hazard Control Program to address lead hazards in over 700 properties in 4 targeted census tracts through 2025. This program is at no cost to eligible homeowners at or below 80% AMI (\$66,400 for a family of 4). Landlords are required to contribute 10% of the cost of remediation.