

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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KEY POINTS FOR MEDIA:

- Lead Poisoning Prevention Week is October 19-25
- Illinois has been expanding childhood testing for lead exposure, with universal testing expected in 2026
- Since adopting a more stringent standard, the number of cases calling for medical intervention has increased by 56%, meaning more children are receiving services to overcome the harmful effects of lead

IDPH Marks Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 19-25

State's expanded testing regimen helps more children get needed services

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is observing Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 19-25, and reminding all parents and caregivers of young children to be aware of risk factors for lead poisoning and how to prevent it.

IDPH has been steadily expanding the state's testing regimen for lead exposure in children, gradually increasing the number of high-risk ZIP codes where blood testing is required, as the state moves toward universal lead testing in 2026. Additionally, Illinois has adopted a more stringent standard, which requires medical intervention for tests that show a confirmed blood lead level of 3.5 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$). In those cases, a home inspection is conducted to determine the source of the lead contamination. If lead is found, the inspector works with the homeowner to remove the sources of lead. In addition, a public health nurse will contact the family about ways to protect children from the harmful effects of lead.

"Protecting our children from the harmful effects of lead exposure is a critical public health priority," said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. "The Department continues to expand lead testing and adopt stricter standards to ensure that Illinois's children stay safe. During this Lead Poisoning Prevention Week and every week, we encourage Illinoisians to be aware of potential risk factors for lead exposure and how early intervention can prevent our children from experiencing development delays and other associated health concerns."

Since adopting the more stringent standard in 2025, Illinois has seen a sharp uptick in cases requiring intervention. Testing from January through August of 2025 showed a 56% increase in the number of tests indicating an elevated blood lead level, compared to the same period in 2024, under the previous standard of 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$.

Overall, since 2010, approximately 42,000 children in the state have tested positive for elevated levels of lead, around 2.5% of all who were tested. But since testing did not cover everyone, it's feared that as many as 28,000 children in the state who were not tested could be at risk. Illinois's move to implement universal lead testing by the summer of 2026 should identify many more children who have been exposed to harmful levels of lead, allowing them to obtain needed services.

Lead exposure is most commonly associated with paint in homes built before 1978, but lead may also be found in the soil around some homes, as well as in lead pipes, or in certain toys or consumer products imported from overseas. For more information on sources of lead poisoning, go to [Lead Source Guide](#). For more information on Illinois's lead poisoning prevention efforts, go to [Lead Poisoning Prevention](#).

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