



## **BLOOD LEAD TESTING REQUIRED BEFORE SCHOOL ENTRY INFORMATION FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**

### ***Do Iowa children need to have a blood lead test before they start kindergarten?***

Yes, beginning in the fall of 2008, all Iowa children must have proof of a blood lead test before starting kindergarten, or as soon after that as the parents are notified that the child needs a test.

### ***Most of my patients were tested for lead poisoning at a younger age. Is another test needed?***

No, if the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has a record of the test, a child does not need another test to meet this requirement. However, IDPH recommends and Medicaid requires that children be tested several times for lead poisoning. Please see “***What is the Iowa Department of Public Health’s recommendation for blood lead testing?***” on the next page.

### ***Do parents need to take a copy of their child’s blood lead test to the school?***

IDPH will let the parents and the schools know if they do not have a record of the test. (Laboratories and physicians are required to report all blood lead test results to IDPH.)

### ***Will Medicaid, hawk-i, or private insurance cover the cost of a blood lead test?***

Medicaid and *hawk-i* will both pay for a blood lead test. Many insurance plans also pay for this test. If a family does not have a way to pay for this test, IDPH will have some funds to pay for it.

### ***Is there a religious exemption for the blood lead testing requirement?***

Yes, there is a religious exemption. There is a form that the family must fill out and have notarized. The parents must file this form with the school. The form will soon be available from the Iowa Department of Public Health, schools, and local health departments.

### ***Will children be kept out of school if they have not had a blood lead test?***

Children will not be kept out of school. However, childhood lead poisoning is a serious problem in Iowa. It causes learning disabilities and could affect a child’s school performance, so we strongly recommend that all children be tested for lead poisoning.

### ***How will the Iowa Department of Public Health know if a child has had a blood lead test?***

Since 1992, Iowa law has required the results of all blood lead testing done on Iowa residents to be reported to the Iowa Department of Public Health. The department has a database containing approximately 700,000 blood lead test results. No more than 60 days after school starts, each school must send the department a spreadsheet containing the name, address, and date of birth of all kindergarten students. The department will do an electronic match of these spreadsheets with the department’s database to determine which children have been tested and which children have not been tested. The department will report this information to the schools and will work with the school, local health agencies, and local health care providers to get children tested if they have not had a blood lead test. For this process to work, it is important for health care providers to ensure that the laboratories that they use report to the department as required by Iowa law.

**Does the Iowa Department of Public Health recognize blood lead testing that is done with the Lead Care II?**

The Iowa Department of Public Health **does** recognize blood lead testing that is done with the Lead Care II. However, providers using a Lead Care II should be aware of the following:

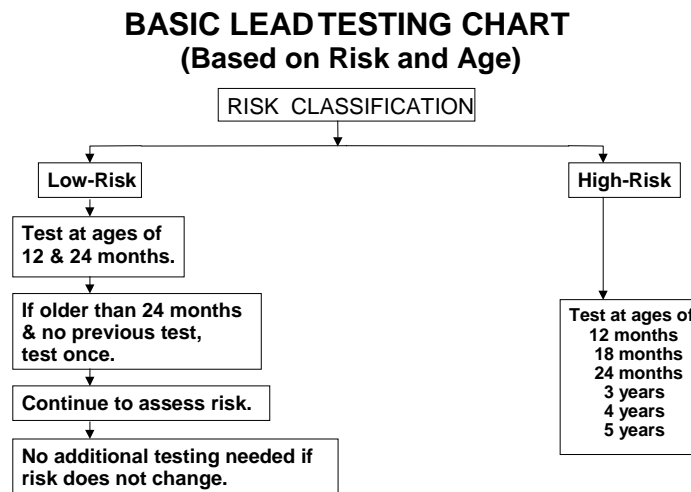
- If you use a Lead Care II, you become the analytical laboratory and are required to report the results of all blood lead testing to the department electronically each week. (There is free software available from ESA, the manufacturer of the Lead Care II, to facilitate this reporting.)
- All blood lead tests done on the Lead Care II will be considered capillary or screening tests, whether capillary or venous blood is used. Children with levels of 15 micrograms per deciliter ( $\mu\text{g/dL}$ ) or higher on a Lead Care II must be retested using venous blood sent to a reference laboratory. Children who have had previous levels greater than or equal to 15  $\mu\text{g/dL}$  must be tested with venous blood lead samples sent to a reference lab until their blood lead level drops to less than 15  $\mu\text{g/dL}$ .
- The department is developing regulations regarding payment for blood lead testing when a family does not have a source of payment. Providers using a Lead Care II may need to meet additional requirements, such as participating in a proficiency program, to qualify for this program.

**Is lead poisoning still a problem in Iowa?**

Yes, lead poisoning affects 1 in 14 Iowa children. This is four times the national average. Most cases of childhood lead poisoning are caused by lead-based paint in housing built before 1960. More than 60 percent of Iowa’s housing was built before 1960.

**What is the Iowa Department of Public Health’s recommendation for blood lead testing?**

The department recommends that all children be tested for lead poisoning. If the provider uses the department’s questionnaire to assess risk, children can be tested according to the low-risk or high-risk schedule. (The risk questionnaire is available from IDPH.) If the provider does not assess risk, then all children should be tested according to the high-risk schedule. Iowa law requires all children covered by Medicaid to be tested according to this schedule.



**Where can I get more information?**

For more information, contact one of the following agencies:

Iowa Department of Public Health  
1 (800) 972-2026  
(515) 281-3479  
or your local city or county health department