

**Warren County Public Health
Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Annual Report, February 2022**

**get ahead
of Lead**



Purpose

The Warren County Public Health “Lead Poisoning Prevention Program” annual brief gives healthcare providers and other community partners an overview about lead in our communities. It also provides basic information about the lead poisoning prevention program facilitated by Warren County Public Health and information about the changes to the definition of elevated lead levels in children.

Lead poisoning is completely preventable. It is important for health care providers and community partners to work together to inform families about the dangers of lead poisoning and the steps that can be taken to reduce childhood lead poisoning.

Lead Poisoning Prevention Program - Overview

Warren County Public Health's lead poisoning prevention program is funded by grant monies from New York State Department of Health. The grant money is utilized for multiple purposes including lead testing for children ages 1 and 2 as required by New York State Public Health Law. Families that are unable to pay for the lead testing can contact Warren County Public Health to arrange to have their child tested for lead at no cost.

Warren County Public Health is also responsible for follow up with families if their child's lead test shows elevated levels of lead in their blood stream. In 2019 NYSDOH revised the elevated lead level guidelines for children from 10 mg/dl to 5 mg/dl. The reasoning behind the change is as follows

Studies show that no amount of lead exposure is safe for children. Even low levels of lead in blood can affect children's health including: reduced growth indicators; delayed puberty; lowered IQ; and hyperactivity, attention, behavior, and learning problems. NYS Public Health Law (§ 1370) and [Regulations](#) were amended to lower the definition of an elevated blood lead level in a child to 5 micrograms per deciliter.

This small change has led to an increase in the number of children diagnosed as having high blood lead levels. Because of these new guidelines Warren County Public Health has seen an increase in the number of families requiring follow-up calls to address their child's elevated lead levels.

The follow-up varies based on child's lead level and can include gathering information about a child's daily habits and potential sources of lead exposure and basic lead poisoning prevention education. Environmental assessments (home visits) are conducted for children with blood lead levels ≥ 5 mg/dl.

Once the follow-up has been conducted and lead exposure mitigation measures have been implemented Warren County Public Health works with families and healthcare providers to have a follow-up lead test. The additional lead test can show if the interventions have reduced or eliminated the sources of lead exposure.

New York State Public Health Law and Regulations require health care providers to:

- Test all children at age 1 year and again at age 2 with a blood lead test.
- At every well child visit, assess all children ages 6 months to 6 years for risk of lead exposure. Also get a blood lead test if there is a positive response to ANY questions in Does Your Child Need a Lead Test?
- Report point-of-care blood lead test results to the NYS DOH in accordance with guidance.
- Give the child's parent or guardian of the child the result of the blood lead test. You may also give them this helpful information [What Your Child's Blood Lead Test Means](#).
- Provide anticipatory guidance to all parents or guardians of children as part of routine care, which may include the [Lead Poisoning is a Danger for Every Baby and Child](#).

Lead in Warren County

Lead can come from a variety of sources, but the most common source is from lead-based paint which was used in houses built prior to 1978. In Warren County 61% of homes were built prior to 1979. This does not mean that all of these homes contain lead-based paint, but with that many homes being built during a time when lead based paints were used, it is plausible that a considerable number of Warren County children live in homes with the potential for elevated lead exposures. Also, these old homes may contain older plumbing that used lead solder and lead pipes which could leach lead into the home's water supply.

Since lead poisoning has no visible sign and symptoms the only way to know for sure is to have children tested for lead. Children ages 1 and 2 are more likely to have high exposures to lead because they spend most of their time on the ground and are more likely to ingest paint chips by picking them up and eating them or by chewing on surfaces that contain lead. Dust containing lead can also be a problem for young children since they are not able to wash their hands on their own and they are more likely to touch surfaces with dust that may contain lead and then put their hands in their mouth.

Current Lead Testing in Warren County

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the release of new data regarding lead testing in Warren County has been delayed. However, Table 1 provides a snapshot of the level of lead testing that occurred among children born in 2015. The data shows that 96.9% of Warren County children born in 2015 had receive at least one blood lead level test by 35 months of age. This is better than Upstate New York. The table also shows that 84.8% of children born in 2015 received a second blood lead test by 36 months as required by NYSDOH regulations. Again, this is better than Upstate New York.

From 2016-2018 Warren County had 11 children identified as having high blood lead levels above 10 mg/dl per the old guidance. It is anticipated that the number of children considered to have high blood lead levels will increase with the new criteria for high blood lead level is 5 mg/dl.

Table 1

CHIRS Indicators	Data Years	Warren		NYS excluding NYC	
		Numerator	Percentage	Percentage	Significant
			(or) Rate	(or) Rate	Different
		(or) Ratio	(or) Ratio		
97-Percentage of children born in 2015 with a lead screening aged 0-8 months	2015	3	0.6*	1.1	No
98-Percentage of children born in 2015 with a lead screening - aged 9-17 months	2015	511	94.6	71.8	Yes
99-Percentage of children born in 2015 with a lead screening - aged 18-35 months	2015	523	96.9	72.1	Yes
100-Percentage of children born in 2015 with at least two lead screenings by 36 months	2015	458	84.8	56.7	Yes
101-Incidence of confirmed high blood lead level (10 micrograms or higher per deciliter) - rate per 1,000 tested children aged <72 months	2016-2018	11	3.3	6.5	Yes

Data Source: New York State Community Health Indicator Reports (CHIRS) - County Level: Warren County

Lead Poisoning Prevention in Warren County

From 2015-2018 there were 4,728 recorded lead tests for Warren County children thanks to health care providers. The goal is to make sure that every child who needs a lead test gets one and for those children found to have elevated blood lead levels appropriate follow-up care is provided.

There is some concern that there may be a decline in the number of children receiving the required lead tests at the appropriate ages due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Warren County Public Health will continue to monitor the data and communicate with health care providers to ensure that any decline in lead testing for children is temporary.

For more information about the Warren County Lead Poisoning Prevention Program or to see how you can partner with Public Health to reduce lead exposure for children in Warren County contact Sarah Arnold at 518-761-6580.