



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

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CHILDHOOD LEAD EXPOSURE FELL 21% IN 2019 COMPARED TO 2018

Since 2005 there has been a 92% decrease in the number of New York City children under 6 with elevated blood lead levels

The number of children with elevated blood lead levels has fallen 54% since 2014.

July 31, 2020 – The Health Department today released its latest **Childhood Blood Lead Level Surveillance Quarterly Report** covering all four quarters of 2019.

In 2019, 352,567 children younger than 18 in New York City were tested for lead exposure. Of the children tested, there were 3,739 children with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater—which is 978 fewer children than in 2018, or a 21% decline. The number of children with elevated blood lead levels has fallen 54% since 2014.

Among children who lived or spent time in NYCHA housing, there was an almost 25% decline, from 138 cases in 2018 to 104 cases in 2019.

“A single child with an elevated blood lead level is one too many,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot**. “As a city, we will continue to aggressively investigate every situation where a child is found to have an elevated blood lead level. And we encourage parents of young children to get their children tested at ages 1 and 2 and to call 311 if they notice peeling or damaged paint in the home.”

During the fourth quarter (October, November, December) of 2019, 769 children under age 18 had a blood lead level of 5 mcg/dL or greater, a 22% reduction compared to 982 children during the same time period in 2018.

Launched in August 2018, this quarterly report is an initiative of the Health Department and complements the City’s annual blood lead level surveillance [report](#). In July 2018, the City announced more stringent measures to reduce childhood lead exposure and became one of the first jurisdictions in the country to conduct environmental investigations for all children under 18 years old with a blood lead level of 5 micrograms per deciliter or greater. Mayor de Blasio also announced in January last year the LeadFreeNYC plan, a comprehensive roadmap to end childhood lead exposure.

The Health Department, through its Healthy Homes and Environmental Exposure Assessment and Education Programs, has developed a comprehensive approach to address elevated blood

lead levels in children and adults and to reduce lead hazards in homes and communities. This approach includes follow-up investigations of individuals with elevated blood lead levels, environmental interventions and enforcement activities, education and outreach, surveillance and research.

New York City also has one of the highest testing rates in the state — more than 80% of New York City children are tested at least once before their third birthday. The Health Department collaborates with Medicaid Managed Care Plans to improve testing and do annual reminders to health care providers.

About LeadFreeNYC

In January 2019, Mayor de Blasio announced the LeadFreeNYC plan. The approach is twofold: prevent exposure to lead hazards in the first place and respond quickly and comprehensively if a child has an elevated blood lead level. To protect New York City kids, the City will increase resources and support for children, parents, and health care providers to make sure every child under 3 is tested for lead exposure – and any child who does test positive gets the services they need. The website, [LeadFreeNYC](#), provides information and guidance for parents, tenants, landlords, and all New Yorkers. The website includes data and progress on the City’s lead prevention initiatives and includes educational materials to help New Yorkers understand the dangers of lead and the tools available to anyone who may have been exposed to lead.

Lead poisoning is preventable. Avoid exposure.

- Building owners are required to safely fix peeling paint. Report peeling or damaged paint to your building owner. If they do not fix it, or work is done unsafely (e.g. dust is not contained while they work), you can [report the problem online](#) or by calling 311.
- Keep children away from peeling paint and renovations.
- Wash floors and windowsills often. Wash hands and toys of children under age 6.
- Remove shoes before entering your home.
- If someone in your household works in construction, wash work clothes separately from the family laundry.
- Learn more about avoiding products that may contain lead, such as imported pottery, food and cosmetics, and traditional medicines. Visit [nyc.gov/lead](#).

Get tested.

A blood test is the only way to find out if you or your child has an elevated blood lead level. In New York State, children must be tested for lead poisoning at ages 1 and 2, and screened for risk up to age 6. Ask your doctor about testing older children if you think they may have been exposed to lead. Pregnant people should be assessed for lead exposure at their first prenatal visit. Call 311 for help finding a doctor or clinic.

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