

Blood Lead Screening in Children

Provider Tip Sheet



Measure

Children up to 2 years of age who have had one or more capillary or venous blood tests for lead poisoning **on or before their second birthday**.

Background

The state (DHCS) and federal (CMS) governments require Medi-Cal and Marketplace children under age 2 to be tested for lead poisoning. This is to help prevent the devastating effects of lead exposure on growing brains. Multiple scientific studies have shown that even low blood lead levels can cause developmental delay, behavior, and school problems.

Best practices

- Take advantage of every office visit (including sick visits) to perform lead screening. This includes:
 - Initial screening
 - Confirmatory testing
 - **Provide in-office lead screening, if at all possible, to ensure testing gets done**
- Before the screening, conduct a home assessment. The assessment can include a discussion of:
 - The type of toys, [pottery](#), cosmetics, food and candy, [folk remedies](#), and imported products used in the home.
- **Talk to all parents about the dangers of lead poisoning.** Help parents identify if their child has been exposed or is being exposed and the importance of testing.
- CDC recommends screening of all immigrant, refugee, and internationally adopted children upon arrival in the US.
- Provide [educational materials](#) and childhood lead poisoning resources.
- Provide nutritional guidance and discuss a well-balanced diet. This will help prevent pica, iron deficiency, and other risks of lead accumulation.
- If screening results are positive:
 - Discuss the meaning of the results of blood lead levels and provide culturally sensitive messages when interacting with affected families.
 - Refer the child/family to the local health department and California Children's Services, depending on how high the level is. **See [CA Management Guidelines on Childhood Lead Poisoning for Healthcare Providers](#).**
- Since the accumulation of lead can begin during pregnancy, provide [education to pregnant](#) women on the harmful effects of lead and conduct initial and follow-up screening of pregnant and lactating women, if you see these patients.



Documentation

Document the information you provided on lead screening in the patient's chart.

- DHCS requires that providers give oral and written anticipatory guidance to all parents/guardians of children at each periodic health assessment from 6 to 72 months, including information related to the harmful effects of lead.
- CA law requires a blood lead screening for Medi-Cal members at ages 12 and 24 months and a catch-up test for children ages 24 months to 6 years who were not screened at 12 and 24 months.



Coding

- CPT Code: 83655

Provider Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention
California Department of Public Health	Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch
Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units	Recommendations on Management of Childhood Lead Exposure
Standard of Care Guidelines on Childhood Lead Poisoning for California Health Care Providers	https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/CLPPB/CDPH%20Document%20Library/CLPPB-care%20guideline_sources%20of%20lead.pdf
California Management Guidelines on Childhood Lead Poisoning for Health Care Providers	https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/CLPPB/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Lead_HAGs_Table.pdf
Blood Lead Test and Anticipatory Guidance	https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/chdp/Documents/HAG/Chapter6.pdf
Blood Lead Testing	https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/CLPPB/CDPH%20Document%20Library/BLT_20160426.pdf