



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
ADAM J. BELLO
MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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MONROE COUNTY ANNOUNCES 2023 LEAD POISONING DATA, HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF TESTING DURING NATIONAL LEAD PREVENTION WEEK

ROCHESTER, NY — County Executive Adam Bello and the Monroe County Department of Public Health today announced that 12,788 children were tested for lead poisoning in 2023, up from 12,108 in 2022. Of those tested, 241 were found to have elevated blood lead levels of 5 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) or higher, an increase from 141 cases in 2022. These results underscore the ongoing need for awareness and action to prevent childhood lead poisoning.

“Lead poisoning remains a serious public health issue, and can have devastating effects on children,” **said County Executive Bello**. “As a community committed to the health, safety, and well-being of our residents, we recognize the importance of regular testing because the effects of lead poisoning are often silent. We urge residents to test their children for elevated lead levels and recommit ourselves to educating our community on lead prevention.”

New York State law mandates that all children be tested for lead at ages 1 and 2, with continued screening for at-risk children until age 6. Lead poisoning can lead to serious developmental issues, including learning disabilities and behavioral problems. Older homes, particularly those built before 1978, continue to pose a significant risk due to lead-based paint.

“Lead poisoning is entirely preventable. Early testing ensures that we minimize a child’s risk of developing long-term consequences of lead poisoning by catching and acting on low levels of exposure,” **said Monroe County’s Acting Commissioner of Public Health, Dr. Marielena Vélez De Brown**. “I am pleased to see strategies taking place in our community to avoid lead exposure altogether. I invite all community members to join our efforts to ensure that all children have the chance to grow up healthy by visiting www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/ to educate themselves about steps they can take in their own homes and in our community at large.”

Among the 241 children found to have elevated lead levels, 176 had blood lead levels between 5 and 9.9 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$, 33 had levels between 10 and 14.9 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$, 16 had levels between 15 and 19.9 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$, and 16 had levels above 20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. Two children had levels above 45 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$, a dangerous threshold requiring immediate medical intervention. The majority of cases (197) came from ZIP codes within the City of Rochester, largely due to the City’s concentration of older homes.

Release of the 2023 findings coincides with National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW), an annual campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of lead exposure. This year's theme, 'Bright futures begin lead-free,' reinforces the critical importance of testing and prevention.

Monroe County works closely with the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning (CPLP), a local organization committed to eliminating childhood lead exposure through public education and advocacy.

"As a community, we have made tremendous strides to dramatically reduce childhood lead poisoning, but 2023's data makes it clear that our work is not done," said **Clare Henrie, director of the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning**. "The Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning and our partners will continue our efforts to eliminate lead poisoning, because every kid in Monroe County deserves to be safe from lead!"

Monroe County encourages all parents, caregivers and property owners to reduce lead exposure risks. Have your children tested for lead and inspect your homes for potential hazards. For more information, visit the [Monroe County Lead Poisoning Prevention Program](#) and theleadcoalition.org.

What Elevated Blood Lead Levels Mean

- 5-9.9 µg/dL: At this level, children may show no immediate symptoms, but their brain development could still be affected. Early intervention and eliminating the source of exposure are crucial.
- 10-14.9 µg/dL: This range is associated with a greater risk of learning and behavioral problems.
- 15-19.9 µg/dL: Children at these levels may face more serious developmental risks, and the home environment should be evaluated for lead abatement.
- 20+ µg/dL: This level is considered dangerous, and medical intervention, such as chelation therapy, may be necessary to remove lead from the child's bloodstream.

What Parents Can Do

Parents and caregivers can take several important steps to reduce the risk of lead exposure:

1. Test your child: Ensure your child gets a blood test for lead at ages 1 and 2.
2. Inspect your home: Check for peeling or chipping paint, especially in homes built before 1978.
3. Keep areas clean: Regularly wet mop floors and wipe windowsills with wet cloths to reduce lead dust.
4. Use lead-safe practices: Follow lead-safe practices during renovations to prevent lead dust exposure.
5. Monitor toys and products: Be cautious of recalled toys and imported products that may contain lead.

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