

Special Bulletin

For professional providers

October 17, 2025

Protect Pennsylvania's Children from Lead Poisoning

With National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week occurring this month (Oct. 19-25, 2025), it's important to prioritize blood lead screening for young children.

- **Pennsylvania ranks among the worst in the nation** – In 2019, the state had the second-highest number of children testing positive for lead poisoning. Of the top 10 states that had the highest rates of children with elevated blood lead levels, Pennsylvania ranked second-worst for childhood lead testing, with only 18.7% of children being screened¹.
- **Thousands of children are affected** – In 2022, over 7,000 children under six years old in the state had elevated blood lead levels².
- **New exposure risks** – Lead continues to be identified in everyday items like food, clothing, and toys³.

As you know, lead exposure can have devastating, long-lasting effects on children, including slowed development, learning and behavior problems, and speech and hearing difficulties⁴.

What You Need to Know

Highmark Healthy Kids (CHIP) requires blood lead testing for members between 9 months and 2 years, aligning with recommendations from American Academy of Pediatrics and Bright Futures⁵.

- **Testing is essential:** A risk assessment questionnaire is not a substitute for a blood lead test.
- **No cost to families:** Blood lead testing is covered on the preventive schedule for children ages 0-30 months at no out-of-pocket cost to families, as part of Highmark's True Performance program.
- **Incentivize screening for CHIP members:** Remind parents or guardians about the \$15 Walmart gift card reward for completing lead screenings for children ages 0-2 in 2025.

Take Action Today

- **Educate families:** Discuss the importance of lead screening and the dangers of lead poisoning with all parents or guardians.
- **Offer in-office screening:** Provide convenient in-office blood lead screening to improve completion rates and ensure continuity of care.
- **Test at every opportunity:** Each office visit, including sick visits, can be used to perform blood lead testing based on guidelines. Children should be screened for lead based on guidelines.

- **Use CPT Code 83655:** This code indicates that a blood lead test was performed.

Additional Resource

The PA Lead Information Line (800-440-LEAD) is available to the public and professionals. Specialists can provide information and guidance on preventing exposure, resources for lead removal, and consumer alerts.

References

1. [Report \(paleadfree.org\)](https://paleadfree.org).
2. [2022 Childhood Lead Surveillance Annual Report](#).
3. [Recalls of Children's Products, Foods, Cosmetics, and Medicines Due to Lead Hazards | Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention | CDC](#).
4. [Lead Exposure Symptoms and Complications | Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention | CDC](#).
5. [periodicity_schedule.pdf \(aap.org\)](#).

The following entities, which serve the noted regions, are independent licensees of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association: Western and Northeastern PA: Highmark Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Highmark Choice Company, Highmark Health Insurance Company, Highmark Coverage Advantage Inc., Highmark Benefits Group Inc., First Priority Health, First Priority Life or Highmark Senior Health Company. Central and Southeastern PA: Highmark Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Shield, Highmark Benefits Group Inc., Highmark Health Insurance Company, Highmark Choice Company, or Highmark Senior Health Company.

All references to "Highmark" in this document are references to the Highmark company that is providing the member's health benefits or health benefit administration and/or to one or more of its affiliated Blue companies.

