We offer free legal help in many areas, including

- welfare,
- SNAP (food stamps),
- divorce,
- child support,
- domestic violence,
- bankruptcy,
- special education,
- nursing home care,
- health insurance,
- eviction,
- foreclosure,
- and more.

Are you worried about lead poisoning?

January 2020
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- When should my child be tested for lead? .................. 3
- How do I understand the results of my child’s lead test? .......................................................... 3
- When will my home be inspected if my child tests high for lead? ........................................... 4
- What if there are lead problems in my home? .......... 6
- Who can I contact if I am having problems with lead inspection or abatement? ...................... 7
- Who is allowed to remove lead hazards in a home? .............................................................. 8
- Where can I get medical advice or help for my child in school? ............................................. 8-9
Childhood lead poisoning is a common pediatric public health problem, yet it is entirely preventable. Lead harms a child's nervous system and is associated with reduced IQ, behavioral problems, learning disabilities, and more. The problems caused by lead poisoning may be irreversible.

The most common source of lead exposure is from paint in homes built before 1978, but there are other sources of lead that can poison a child or adult. No amount of lead is safe for the body, and the problems caused by lead poisoning may be irreversible.

**When should my child be tested for lead?**

In Connecticut, children between 9 months and 35 months old must be tested for lead poisoning at least once each year. This means your child should be tested for lead at least **2 times before your child turns 3 years old**.

If your child is between 3 and 6 years old and has never been tested for lead, the doctor must test your child. If your child has not been tested, talk to your doctor.

**Remember:** Your health insurance will pay for the tests. If your child is eligible for or enrolled in HUSKY Health, HUSKY will pay for the tests.

**How do I understand the results of my child's lead test?**

**Blood Lead Level**

**No level of lead is safe for your child.** A blood lead level of less than 4 mg/dL is not considered elevated by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention standards, but it means that your child is being exposed to lead. If you live in a home built before 1978 or your child spends time at someone else's older home, monitor your child's activities inside and outside of
the home to make sure they are not ingesting dangerous lead paint chips or dust. Clean all toys and inside surfaces weekly using wet cleaning methods. Make sure to wash your child’s hands often, especially before they eat.

In Connecticut, a **number of 5 mg/dL or more is elevated.** Your child’s blood results will be reported to the local health department and the State Department of Public Health. The doctor must

- give you information about lead poisoning in your first language, and
- recommend treatment for your child.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health has information on their website or go to www.ctlawhelp.org/leadpaint.

**Retesting**

If the blood lead level number is 5 or higher, the doctor must continue to test your child’s blood until the result is **below 5**.

**Remember:** Some doctors will test more often if your child is at risk of lead poisoning. You can ask your doctor if they can schedule more frequent tests.

**When will my home be inspected if my child tests high for lead?**

Your local health department is required to inspect your home if any of these are true:

- Your child’s blood lead level is **20 or more.** Some cities have ordinances that require inspections at blood levels lower than 20. For example, in New Haven, homes can be inspected if a child tests at **5 or more.**

**How can I get help for my child in school?**

Children who suffer from lead poisoning may need additional help in school. In Connecticut, problems from lead poisoning count as a disability and may allow your child to be placed in a special education program.

If you think your child is not learning or growing as expected, you can contact the Child Find Project for more information. Under Child Find, states and schools districts must find and evaluate all children who need special education services. They will do this until the child turns 21, so students in elementary, middle, and high school can use Child Find. To contact Child Find, call 1-800-445-2722.

**More resources for lead poisoning**

- **United Way:** Dial 2-1-1 or go to https://www.211ct.org/.
- **Child Development Info Line:** 1-800-505-7000.
- **Children’s Medical Center’s Healthy Homes Program:** 860-837-4241
  www.connecticutchildrens.org
  The Healthy Homes Program is available in the following towns or cities: Bridgeport, Danbury, East Haven, Enfield, Hartford, Manchester, Meriden, New Britain, New Haven, Norwalk, Seymour, Stamford, Torrington, Waterbury, West Haven, and Winchester. If you qualify for their services, they will help with inspections, abatement, and relocation.
Where can I get legal help?
If you are unable to get help from your local health department or the Department of Public Health, contact Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320.

Who is allowed to remove lead hazards in a home?
In Connecticut, only licensed contractors are allowed to remove lead in a home (this is called abatement). The Department of Public Health keeps a list of licensed abatement contractors. Contact your local health department if the work on your home is not being done by a licensed lead abatement contractor.

1. Go to: www.elicense.ct.gov/Lookup/GenerateRoster.aspx
2. Scroll down, click on Lead Consulting and Abatement Professionals, and select Lead Abatement Contractors.
3. Go to the bottom and click Continue.
4. Click Download.

Where can I get medical advice for my child?
If your child has been lead poisoned, there are two regional treatment centers in Connecticut:

Yale New Haven Regional Treatment Center
203-688-2195
1 Park Street
New Haven, CT 06510

Hartford Regional Lead Treatment Center
860-547-0979
114 Woodland Street
Hartford, CT 06105

- Your child had two blood tests that were taken more than 3 months apart, and the results were between 15 and 19. For example, if your child’s blood level is 16 on September 1 and it is 17 on December 15, the local health department must inspect your home.
- You live in a multi-family building, you have a child under age 6, and another child in the building has a high blood lead level.

The local health department will test paint, soil, dust, and water for lead. They may also test things like cultural medicines from outside the U.S.

The health department will ask you questions about your home, your job, and your child’s habits. **It is important to answer their questions fully** to help them find out where the lead is coming from.

Scheduling inspections
Your doctor will send your child’s blood level results to your local health department. The health department must contact you within **5 business days** to schedule the inspection. They should finish the inspection within **30 business days** of when they were told about the test results.

What if I live in Section 8 or Federal Public Housing?
Federal law requires that housing authorities inspect the homes of any child with a lead blood level of 5 or more. If you live in Section 8 or federal public housing, contact your housing authority right away if your child has a lead blood level of 5 or more. If your home is not inspected in a reasonable time period, contact the HUD office in Hartford or Boston.
What if there is lead paint in my home?

If the inspectors find lead problems inside or outside your home, the owner or landlord must have a licensed company come in and fix the lead problems. This is called abatement.

If your child has a blood lead level of 20 or higher (or a level of between 15 to 19 from two tests taken at least three months apart), the owner or landlord must get rid of the lead in the home.

If another child in your building has lead poisoning and an inspection finds defective surfaces in your home, the owner or landlord must fix your home as well. Defective surfaces are areas with peeling or flaking paint, or surfaces that a child could chew on or eat lead paint from. Windows and doors can also cause lead dust when the lead-painted surfaces rub against each other.

How will they fix the lead problems in my home?
The local health department will issue a lead abatement order. This order says home owner or landlord must get rid of the lead problems in the home. The owner must create a lead abatement plan. The owner will work with the local health department, which must approve the plan. This plan will include start and end dates.

Remember: You can ask for a copy of the lead abatement plan from the owner of the building. If you have any questions about the plan, talk to your local health department. If abatement is not done by the end date on the lead abatement plan, contact your local health department.

Abatement must begin within 45 working days of the inspection results if your child has lead poisoning. After the abatement is done, the local director of health must re-inspect the home within 10 business days and write a post-abatement inspection report once they find there are no lead hazards left in the home.

Remember: If the abatement is very difficult or your child’s blood lead level is too high, you may be asked to move for a short time. The owner of the home must try to help with relocation. They may put you in a hotel for a few days or you can temporarily move to a relative’s home. The local health department will need to check that your new home does not have lead as well.

Who can I contact if I am having problems with lead inspection or abatement?
First, contact your local health department. You can find the contact information for your local health department at www.ctlawhelp.org/leadpaint.

- Your local health department will be able to answer your questions about lead dangers, treatment, licensed companies, money for abatement, and more.
- If you are having a problem with your landlord or the owner of the building, you can also speak to your local health district official.

Second, contact the State of Connecticut’s Department of Public Health. You can contact the Department of Public Health’s Lead Poisoning Prevention and Control program at 860-509-7299. You can also visit the Department of Public Health website at www.ct.gov/preventlead.