Childhood Blood Lead Level Surveillance
Quarters 1-4 2018, New York City
April 2019

This report details trends in childhood blood lead surveillance data in New York City, and has been updated to include data for October, November and December 2018. The number and rate of children with elevated blood lead levels in New York City are at a historic low, and continue to decline.

Since 2005 we have seen an 89% decrease in the number of children under 18 years of age with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater. In 2018, a total of 351,486 children were tested for lead poisoning, and 346,769 (98.7%) had blood lead levels below 5 mcg/dL. The number of children with elevated blood lead levels declined both among children associated with private housing – an 11% decline from 5,157 cases in 2017 to 4,579 cases in 2018; and among children associated with NYCHA housing – a 14% decline from 160 cases in 2017 to 138 cases in 2018.

Children associated with public housing typically have lower rates of elevated blood lead levels than children living in private housing. In 2018, the rate of children with elevated blood lead levels among children associated with private housing was 14 per 1,000 children tested, and among children associated with public housing the rate was 5.6 per 1,000 children tested. In both private and public housing the number of children with elevated blood lead levels declined in 2018 compared to 2017. For every 1,000 children tested, approximately 1 less child had an elevated blood lead level; overall, 600 fewer children citywide had an elevated blood lead level in 2018 compared to 2017.

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**Number and rate of children under 18 years old with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater by year and housing type, New York City 2010-2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of children with BLL of 5 mcg/dL or greater</th>
<th>Rate (per 1,000 tested) of children with BLL of 5 mcg/dL or greater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>16,537</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>13,974</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>9,932</td>
<td>9,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>8,824</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>8,130</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>6,734</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>6,274</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>5,317</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>4,717</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2018 data are preliminary.

Note: The data above represents unique children per year. Adding across years will result in duplicate counts of individual children over time. Between 2010 and 2018 there were 64,850 children under the age of 18 who had a blood lead level of 5 mcg/dL or greater; 2,070 of these children were associated with NYCHA.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now uses a reference level of 5 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL) to identify children ages 1-5 years who are in the highest 2.5% of children when tested for lead in their blood.
Comparison of each quarter in a given year to the corresponding quarter in each previous year shows a declining trend in the number of children with elevated blood lead levels from 2014 to 2017. This trend continued in all four quarters of 2018.

From January - March 2018, there were 1,289 children under age 18 with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater, an 11% reduction compared to 1,441 children during the same time period in 2017.

From April - June 2018, there were 1,152 children under age 18 with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater, a 13% reduction compared to 1,318 children during the same time period in 2017.

From July - September 2018, there were 1,294 children under age 18 with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater, a 10% reduction compared to 1,442 children during the same time period in 2017.

From October - December 2018, there were 982 children under age 18 with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater, a 12% reduction compared to 1,116 children during the same time period in 2017.
Children under 6 years of age are at greatest risk for elevated blood lead levels because they are growing rapidly and because they explore the world with hand-to-mouth activity.

In 2018, 3,866 New York City children younger than 6 years of age were identified with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater. This change represents a 9% decline from 2017 when there were 4,261 children with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater, a 72% decline since 2010 when there were 13,951 children with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater, and a 90% decline since 2005.
In 2018, there was a 24% increase in the number of older children (6 years of age or older) tested for an elevated blood level associated with NYCHA housing. However, the increase in testing did not result in more children with elevated blood lead levels.

Between 2014 and 2018, there was a declining trend in the number of children under age 6 years with elevated blood lead levels across all blood lead level groups.
Concerned about lead poisoning?
Here's what you can do:

Lead poisoning is preventable. Avoid exposure.
• Report peeling or damaged paint to your building owner. Building owners are required to safely fix peeling paint. If they do not fix peeling paint, or if work is being done in an unsafe manner (for example, creating dust that is not being contained), you should report them online or by calling 311.
  o NYCHA residents concerned about their home or their children can call 718-707-7771.
• Keep children away from peeling paint and home renovations.
• Wash floors and windowsills often. Wash children's hands and toys, too.
• Remove shoes before entering your home.
• Wash work clothes separately from the family laundry if someone in your household works in construction.
• Learn more about avoiding products that may contain lead, such as imported pottery, food and cosmetics, and traditional medicines. Visit nyc.gov/health.

Get tested.
• A blood test is the only way to find out if you or your child have 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 women should be assessed for lead exposure at their first prenatal visit.
• Call 311 for help finding a doctor or clinic.

Data Notes and Definitions
• Data in this report were collected during routine childhood lead surveillance by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene 2010-2018.
• Data for 2018 are preliminary. Numbers and categorization of children by blood lead level, borough and type of housing can change for a variety of reasons, including address change, misreported addresses and invalid blood tests.
• Each child is counted only once per year, but the data do not represent unique children if added over multiple years. NYCHA housing is categorized based on the address listed on the laboratory report of the child’s highest blood lead level in a given period. The child’s highest venous test is used first, and if not available, the finger-stick test or unknown test type is used.