

## How do you know what your blood lead level is?

The only way you can tell what your blood lead level is, is by having a regular blood lead test.

As there is lead in the environment, everyone will have some lead in their bodies due to past use in petrol and paint. No-one will have a blood lead test result of zero  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ . Knowing your blood lead level will enable you to monitor your exposure and absorption of lead.

Low blood lead levels should not be interpreted as a sign that testing is no longer necessary – it only indicates the current levels of lead in the body.

## What does a blood lead test involve?

Blood lead tests are taken by a simple prick of the finger. The blood sample is then sent to the laboratory and analysed to determine the lead level.

Lead levels are measured in  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  (micrograms per decilitre).

The World Health Organisation and Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council recommend that all Australians should have a blood lead level below 10  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ .

Come and see us for:

Blood lead testing

Current information about lead

Practical domestic advice

Diet recommendations for pregnant women, young children and babies

Counselling and family support

Community education

For more information

**Environmental Health Centre**  
117 Gertrude Street  
PORT PIRIE SA 5540  
Telephone: 8638 4100  
[www.health.sa.gov.au](http://www.health.sa.gov.au)  
[www.pprhs.sa.gov.au](http://www.pprhs.sa.gov.au)

Non-English speaking: for information in languages other than English, call the Interpreting and Translating Centre and ask them to call The Department of Health. This service is available at no cost to you, contact (08) 8226 1990.

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# Babies, Caregivers and Lead



Environmental  
Health Centre

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## Lead exposure in Port Pirie

Babies are vulnerable to environmental lead exposure and can absorb more than 50% of the lead that enters their bodies.

- > The major risk of exposure for a new baby is dust (or dirt) contaminated with lead.
- > Lead dust is carried on hands, shoes and clothing of adults and builds up on baby clothes and bed linen left outside to dry.
- > Research in Port Pirie shows that washing left outside overnight can collect a large amount of lead-bearing dust.
- > Rainwater, if used, can be another major source of lead for babies.

As babies get older and spend more time on the floor and begin to put toys and objects into mouths, their blood lead levels can increase quite rapidly. Increasing the frequency of hand-washing then becomes very important.

Your baby's own first blood lead test should be at the age of 6 ½ months.

## Protect your baby

### Be 'Lead Smart' around babies

- > Wash and dry your hands before preparing formula, feeding or handling a baby.
- > Do not make formula, drinks or sterilise bottles with rainwater.
- > Dropped bottles and dummies should be cleaned before returning to baby, but dropped food must be thrown away.
- > Keep a spare clean dummy in a sealed container.
- > Do not leave baby to sleep under an open window.
- > Before laying baby on the floor put down a clean rug or blanket.
- > Wash baby toys and play things regularly.
- > Store and wash baby clothes separately from other family clothing and dry indoors if possible.
- > Keep prams, bassinets, car seats & capsules as clean and dust free as possible.
- > Try not to push your baby into the wind when out walking with the pram.
- > When doing a dirty or potentially lead hazardous job, do not cuddle a baby until you have showered, washed your hair and changed your clothes.
- > Encourage adults/children to wash their hands and change out of work clothes before nursing your baby.

## House-keeping

By following these tips you will be protecting the child in your care:-

- > Do not vacuum while your baby is in the room.
- > Wash floor rugs and blankets regularly.
- > Keeping drying time on outside lines to a minimum.
- > Reduce dust and dirt entering your home by leaving shoes outside.
- > Keep pets outside because their fur traps dust. If you do have pets that come indoors, wash them frequently and keep them away from your child.

