



Department of Health

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

HOWARD A. ZUCKER, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

SALLY DRESLIN, M.S., R.N.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

September 2019

Dear Health Care Provider:

This letter is to update you on recent changes to New York State (NYS) Public Health Law and regulations regarding the requirements for management of children with lead exposure. Additionally, this letter will share new guidance and educational materials on childhood lead exposure developed by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) available for your use when providing care to your pediatric patients.

Studies show that no amount of lead exposure is safe for children. Even low levels of lead in blood have been shown to affect a variety of adverse health effects including: reduced growth indicators; delayed puberty; lowered intelligence quotient; and hyperactivity, attention, behavior, and learning problems. Children under six years old are more likely to be exposed to lead than any other age group, as their normal behaviors result in them breathing in or swallowing dust from old lead paint that gets on floors, window sills, and hands, and can be found in soil, toys, and other consumer products. Some of your young patients are undoubtedly affected. New York has more pre-1950 housing containing lead paint than any other state in the nation. In fact, lead paint has been found in approximately 43 percent of all of New York's dwellings.

In response to our greater understanding of lead's effects on pediatric health and in accordance with leading organization recommendations, NYS Public Health Law (§ 1370) and regulations (Part 67 of Title 10 of the New York Codes, Rules, and Regulations) were recently amended to lower the definition of an elevated blood lead level in a child to 5 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) (previously 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$), effective on October 1, 2019. Additionally, the regulatory amendments require primary health care providers to:

- Confirm any capillary blood lead specimens equal to or greater than 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ with a venous blood sample and perform risk reduction and nutrition counseling (previously 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$).
- Ensure each child under 18 years of age with a confirmed venous blood lead level equal to or greater than 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ (previously 15 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) receives a complete diagnostic evaluation; medical treatment, as needed; and referral to the appropriate local health department for environmental management. A complete diagnostic evaluation shall include at a minimum: a detailed lead exposure assessment, a nutritional assessment including iron status, and a developmental screening.

NYS regulations continues to require primary health care providers to routinely test all children for lead with a blood lead test at one year and again at two years of age; assess all children ages six months to six years at every well visit for risk of lead exposure and obtain a blood lead test if there is a positive response to any of the risk assessment questions; and provide anticipatory guidance for all families about lead poisoning prevention as part of routine care.

Primary health care providers are encouraged to review previous blood lead sample results for all children at the next child visit. For any child whose most recent blood lead level was equal to

or greater than 5 µg/dL (via a capillary or venous sample) prior to October 1, 2019, where concerns for lead exposure persist, NYSDOH recommends a confirmatory (venous) sample be collected. Medical management, care coordination, and environmental management should be initiated if the confirmatory (venous) sample shows a result greater than or equal to 5 µg/dL.

NYSDOH has developed updated guidelines and tools to assist with implementing these changes. Copies of these materials are enclosed and available for you to print at www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/. These materials and additional tools, including a lanyard reference card, will be available to order later this fall. Educational materials have also been developed to help parents understand the risk of childhood lead exposure and steps they can take to reduce this risk. Copies of these materials are enclosed and are also available on the NYSDOH website or may be ordered using the NYSDOH order form available at: <https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/>. Contact information for local health departments and Regional Lead Resource Centers can be found by visiting: www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/exposure/childhood/program_contact_map www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/exposure/childhood/regional_lead_resource_centers

Finally, I wanted to share that you may view blood lead testing reports for your practice within the NYS Immunization Information System (NYSIIS) and generate test due reports, letters, and labels to notify parents and guardians when children are due for their routine and follow up blood lead tests. These reports could be used to assist you in identifying children in your practice who had elevated blood lead levels prior to October 1, 2019. Instructions for generating these reports can be found at https://nysiis.health.state.ny.us/docs/15_Blood_Lead.pdf. For more specific guidance or instructions, please email LPPP@health.ny.gov. A new NYSIIS feature will also allow you to view your practice's Provider Report Card, to receive feedback about your current routine blood lead testing rates as well the timeliness of confirmatory testing for capillary blood lead results equal to or greater than 5 µg/dL. The Provider Report Card and instructions for generating the report card will be available this fall. We hope this information will assist your continued efforts to ensure all children in your practice are receiving the highest quality of care that conforms with NYS Public Health Law.

Thank you for your continued commitment to eliminating childhood lead exposure in NYS. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact your local health department, or the NYSDOH Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 518-402-7600 or visit: www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/

Sincerely,



Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.

Attachments:

- *Guidelines for Health Care Providers for the Prevention, Identification, and Management of Lead Exposure in Children* www.health.ny.gov/publications/6671.pdf
- *Does Your Child Need A Lead Test?* www.health.ny.gov/publications/6670.pdf
 - o In-office tool to assist in performing routine lead risk-assessments at well-child visits
- *What Your Child's Blood Lead Test Means* www.health.ny.gov/publications/2526.pdf
 - o Educational handout to provide families at the time of routine blood lead tests, with an area to include test results
- *Good Nutrition Helps: Reduce the Effects of Lead!*
 - o Educational flyer to provide as part of routine anticipatory guidance and when elevated lead levels are detected www.health.ny.gov/publications/6672.pdf
- *Eat a Variety of Nutritious Foods to Help Reduce the Effects of Lead* www.health.ny.gov/publications/2524.pdf
 - o Educational poster to place in patient areas

cc: Lead Poisoning Prevention Program