

October 30, 2017

On behalf of the children of Pennsylvania and a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit organization dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults, I am writing this statement as a general pediatrician and child advocate to support the Pennsylvania Senate Resolution 33 and the establishment of a statewide lead task force. I am encouraging the development of universal lead screening for the children of Pennsylvania.

Because Pennsylvania does not have a universal screening mandate, the data on the prevalence of elevated lead levels in our young children is limited. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health's 2015 Childhood Lead Surveillance Report, only 28% of children less than 23 months of age had been tested for blood lead levelsⁱ. Pennsylvania ranks as one of the leading states in the nation with homes built prior to 1950's, thus potential exposure rates most likely are very highⁱ. The most common exposure is through the dust left behind in the environment from the old lead based paints, plumbing, factories and vehicle exhaust (prior to the elimination of leaded gasoline)ⁱ.

The AAP and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) agree there is no safe level of lead exposure for children. Lead damage is permanent and irreversible. Children under the age of 7 are most vulnerable, especially children under age 2. Children with elevated lead levels are more likely to have behavior and learning challengesⁱⁱ. It has also been documented that lead exposure causes impairments to the developing cardiovascular, immune and endocrine systemsⁱⁱ.

This information can be very frightening to hear and parents maybe wondering what they can do to prevent exposure. The first thing to do is to speak to your child's physician and advocate for your child to be screened prior to age 2. All children in the state are at risk even if they do not live in a home built prior to 1950's. A major source of lead exposure is from dust in the environment. Children often spend several hours a day away from their homes at schools, churches, parks, playgrounds, and homes that may have lead dust. If your child's blood lead level is found to be elevated, your child's doctor and the health department will assist you in resources to find the source of exposure and eliminate it. Additionally, as citizens we can work to have clean green spaces for children to play near our homes.

I am eager to assist as a resource for the SR-33 lead task force in working to eliminate lead exposure, and as a voice for our children advocating for universal lead screening and supporting early intervention for those exposed to lead.

Sincerely,


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- i. Health.pa.gov
- ii. http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/acclpp/blood_lead_levels.htm
- iii. <https://www.aap.org>