

# CDC Updates Childhood Blood Lead Level Reference Value



The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently updated their [blood lead reference value \(BLRV\)](#) for children from 5.0 µg/dL to 3.5 µg/dL in response to the [Lead Exposure Prevention Committee \(LEPAC\) recommendation](#). The blood lead reference value is based on a recent population-based survey, NHANES, which identified a reduction in the 97.5th percentile of the blood lead level (BLL) distribution in U.S. children ages 1-5 years. Children with blood lead levels at or above the BLRV represent those at the top 2.5% with the highest blood lead levels. No safe blood lead level in children has been identified.

## What is the BLRV and does the change impact Washington State?

The BLRV is a population-based measurement that identifies children with higher levels of lead in their blood compared to most U.S. children. It is not a health-based standard, a toxicity threshold or requirement of intervention at an individual patient level.

- CDC's recommendation does not automatically change the guidelines for Washington. An elevated blood lead level (EBLL) for children in Washington is still defined as  $\geq 5$  µg/dL.
- Changing the Washington elevated blood lead level may be possible in the future but would require an update to the Washington State Notifiable Conditions Rule in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). This would be a lengthy process.
- Local health jurisdictions will continue to receive all childhood blood lead test results that are considered elevated ( $\geq 5$  µg/dL).

## What does this mean for medical providers and laboratories?

At this time, DOH is recommending that medical providers continue to follow the [current lead recommendations for children in Washington state](#) until further notice. All children enrolled in Medicaid are required to receive blood lead tests at 12 months and 24 months or once between 24 and 72 months with no record of a previous lead test.

Labs, including clinics using point-of-care lead testing devices, are still required to report all test results to DOH and to report all elevated test results  $\geq 5$  µg/dL to DOH within 2 business days and all other test results within 30 days.

## More Resources

DOH Lead Program: [Lead@doh.wa.gov](mailto:Lead@doh.wa.gov) | 360-236-4280

[Blood Level Reference Value](#)

[Recommended Actions Based on Blood Lead Level](#)

[Standard Surveillance Definitions and Classifications, CDC](#)

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email [civil.rights@doh.wa.gov](mailto:civil.rights@doh.wa.gov).