

CITY OF BALTIMORE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Data watch: Maryland Department of the Environment Releases 2007 Lead Poisoning Data

(Baltimore, MD June 12, 2008)-The Maryland Department of the Environment is reporting today that in 2007, 624 children or 3.5% of the 17,667 children tested in Baltimore City had elevated blood lead levels (at least 10 micrograms per deciliter). This represents a decrease from 843 children or 4.6% of the children tested in 2006.

Over the past decade, the number of children with elevated blood lead levels has fallen from 3,949 in 1998 to 624 in 2007 – a decrease of 82%.

In 2007, 85 children in Baltimore City were identified with venous lead levels over 20 micrograms per deciliter. This represents a 23% increase from 69 children in 2006.

Table 1. Number and percentage of children aged 0-72 months whose blood lead test results were equal to or greater than 10µg/dL in Baltimore City: 1998 – 2007

Year	≥10µg/dl	
	#	%
1998	3949	22.2
1999	2902	16.7
2000	2189	12.1
2001	2027	9.5
2002	1558	9.4
2003	1166	6.4
2004	1183	6.2
2005	854	4.8
2006	843	4.6
2007	624	3.5

“The 2007 data show overall progress with a small but significant rise in children with higher lead levels,” said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner of Health. “The data underscore the need to do more to eliminate lead poisoning.”

The Baltimore City Health Department – together with state, local, and national partners – is launching several new efforts to prevent lead poisoning before it occurs.

- **Primary Prevention Initiative:** The Baltimore City Health Department provides lead poisoning prevention training to home visitors and health care workers who serve pregnant and post-partum high-risk, low-income mothers. When they identify pregnant women living in homes with lead risks, they notify the Baltimore City Health Department. The Health Department provides a home assessment, a health education visit that covers how families can reduce the lead risks in their home.

- **Housing Referral Initiative:** The Baltimore City Health Department, Baltimore Housing Department and Maryland Department of the Environment work together so that when city housing inspectors identify chipping, peeling paint in rental properties, they trigger legal enforcement of state law on lead paint hazards. This enforcement happens before a child is poisoned.
- **Lead Training, Outreach and Policy Initiative:** Starting this Fall, the Baltimore City Health Department will work with community partners to target homeowners, small-scale rental property owners, day laborers, Spanish-speaking families, and high school students studying construction. This project will provide outreach and training on lead-safe work practices for construction and renovation and will heighten awareness of lead risks.

The Health Department is committed to working with partners -- including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Maryland Department of the Environment, and the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning -- to assess the progress of our efforts and adjust strategies as needed.

“While lead poisoning is on the decline, it remains a threat,” said Madeleine Shea, Assistant Commissioner for Healthy Homes. “I hope that parents, community organizations, health care providers, and property owners will continue working together to protect children from lead risks and make sure they are tested.”

Chronic lead poisoning can cause cognitive impairment and behavioral changes. “With the significant progress in the overall rate of lead poisoning- there is a cautionary tale in the increase in the number of the most severely poisoned,” said RuthAnn Norton, executive director of the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning. “It is critical that we continue to invest in resources to create and sustain lead safe housing in order to create healthier futures for all of Baltimore's children”

The Baltimore City Health Department offers FREE lead testing to children under the age of six at 312 N. Charles St, 2nd floor on Tuesdays from 1:00 pm—3:00 pm and on Thursdays from 9:00 am—12:00 pm.

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