

CITY OF BALTIMORE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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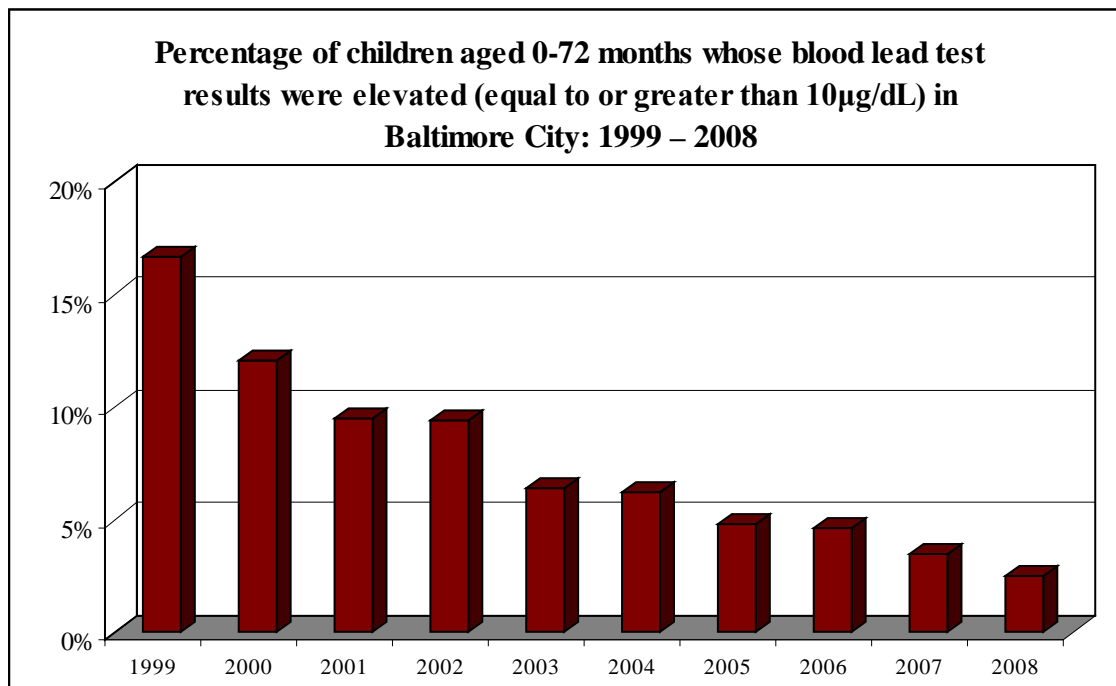
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Data watch: Maryland Department of the Environment Releases 2008 Lead Poisoning Data

Baltimore, MD (July 27, 2009) – The Maryland Department of the Environment is reporting today that in 2008, 468 children or 2.5% of the 18,622 children tested in Baltimore City had elevated blood lead levels (at least 10 micrograms per deciliter). This represents a decrease from 624 children or 3.5% of the children tested in 2007. In 2008, 63 children (0.5%) in Baltimore City were identified with venous lead levels at or above 20 micrograms per deciliter. This represents a decrease from 85 children (0.6%) in 2007.

Over the past decade, the number of children with elevated blood lead levels has fallen from 2,902 in 1999 to 468 in 2008 – a decrease of 83%.



“Lead remains a significant health threat for children, causing cognitive impairment and behavioral changes,” said Interim Commissioner Farrow. “I’m pleased that we continue to make

progress toward the goal of eliminating elevated blood lead levels in children by 2010. But we must remain vigilant and look for innovative ways to better protect our children.”

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

- **Lead Training, Outreach and Policy (TOP) Initiative:** BCHD has worked with a variety of community organizations, government agencies and non-profits to target populations that have not been reached by previous lead programs. The TOP Initiative has reached over 1,300 community members, including renters, homeowners, construction workers, day laborers and property managers in one-hour lead and healthy homes trainings, two-day lead safe work practices trainings, and through Spanish language trainings. BCHD will be hosting a Lead and Healthy Homes Summit in September to bring together leaders and community members to examine regulatory and policy options to improve the health and safety of housing in Baltimore City.

- **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 and health education visit that explains 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.

The Health Department is committed to working with state and community partners to assess the progress of its efforts and adjust strategies as needed. “There are still thousands of homes in Baltimore with lead risks, and we need to be vigilant in making sure no child is poisoned in this City,” 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.”

“The numbers for Baltimore City show the type of continued progress that comes from ensuring that policies and standards are enforced across City agencies and leveraged by partnerships that engaged property owners, community-based organizations and our residents,” said Ruth Ann Norton, executive director of the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning. “But with all of the progress, we must agree, much work is left to be done. Baltimore’s older housing stock continues to pose a serious threat to the health of our young children – and to deliver on the promise of ending childhood lead poisoning, we must focus on the investment in the removal of lead hazards.”

The Baltimore City Health Department offers free lead testing to children under the age of six at 1800 N. Charles St, 5th floor, on Tuesdays from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., and on Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to noon. For more information, visit our Web site at <http://www.baltimorehealth.org/lead.html>.

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