

BREASTFEEDING AND LEAD EXPOSURE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Breastmilk is the preferred food for babies, providing the best nutrition and many health benefits.

- Breastfeeding decreases Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), pneumonia and ear infections.
- Children who were breastfed experience less obesity, asthma and allergies.
- Breastfeeding helps with child brain development and can result in a higher IQ and doing better in school.
- Breastfeeding even helps mothers, decreasing risks of breast and ovarian cancer and heart disease.

Can I still breastfeed if I have been exposed to lead?

The breast acts as a natural filter so that very little lead in the mother's system is passed into the breastmilk. Breastfeeding is recommended unless blood lead levels in the mother are very high.

What can I do, as a breastfeeding mother, to keep my baby safe?

It is important to follow all recommendations regarding exposure to lead. The safest choice for pregnant and breastfeeding women and kids under 6 years of age is to use bottled water for drinking or cooking.

Filtered water is a safe option ONLY if your filter is certified to remove lead and you follow all the instructions and on how to use it/when to replace it. Good nutrition helps too! Follow up with your doctor or WIC dietitian to talk about foods rich in iron, calcium and vitamin C.

If I am breastfeeding and I live in Flint, should I get my lead level tested?

If you are breastfeeding, and you feel you have recently been exposed to lead, lead testing is available at your provider's office, Genesee County Health Department or local WIC offices, if you are a WIC client.

If I am breastfeeding, should my baby be tested for lead?

ALL babies in the Flint area should be tested for lead, regardless of how your baby is being fed. The testing can occur as soon as possible after birth. In fact, it is recommended that ALL CHILDREN under the age of 6 be tested at least once between October 1, 2015 and April 1, 2016.

Where can I get lead testing for myself and my baby?

Your doctor can do lead testing or local health department. If you are participating in the WIC program, WIC offices in the Flint area can also do lead testing on mothers, babies and children.

For information about free water filters or bottled water, call the United Way 211 or visit www.michigan.gov/flintwater.