

Blood Lead Levels in Flint Talking Points

October 5, 2015

- Initial analysis of MDHHS data found that blood lead levels (BLLs) of children in Flint have followed an expected seasonal trend; due to small numbers further analysis was initiated.
- While this analysis of blood lead levels in Flint as a whole remains true, after a comprehensive and detailed review down to the zip code level, we have found that the state analysis is consistent with that presented by Hurley.
- Director Lyon is working closely with DEQ and the administration to take active steps to reduce all potential lead exposures in Flint, and across the state.
- Our Chief Medical Executive has been in communication with the lead investigator at Hurley Children's Hospital, and we continue to work with Hurley, the city of Flint, local and state leaders to verify and analyze data trends.
- Zip code-level data does show that there has been an increase in elevated childhood blood lead levels in specific communities.
 - This does not conclusively mean that the water source change is the sole cause of the increase, but data does show an association.
 - There is an increased proportion of children with elevated Blood Levels (ELBs) in several zip codes, particularly 03 and 04. These appear to have increased over the last 1.5 years.
 - Lead exposure can occur from a number of different sources (such as paint, gasoline, solder, and consumer products) and through different pathways (such as air, food, water, dust, and soil).
 - Although there are several exposure sources, lead-based paint is still the most widespread and dangerous high-dose source of lead exposure for young children in the US and Michigan.
- We reviewed MDHHS statewide data using the same methodology used by Hurley, looking at our numbers by zip code and age ranges, and filtering out non-Flint children.
- Routine surveillance of blood lead levels does not analyze data down to the zip code level. Detailed analysis like this occurs when there is reason to focus in on precise locations or populations.
- MDHHS will be working closely with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Hurley Children's Hospital, the Genesee County Health Department, and community organizations to initiate further action steps.
- We understand that cost may be a barrier to following the recommendations of the local health department. We are actively working with public and private partners to make resources available to those who may need assistance.

- MDHHS is recommending that residents follow the Public Health Advisory issued by the Genesee County Health Department, as well as take further steps to reduce exposures to all forms of lead in and around their homes.

MDHHS Stats and Facts

- 'High Risk' Zip codes (48503 and 48504)
 - Blood lead level rates among children under six years of age in the high risk zip codes (48503, 48504) were 2.7 times higher than the rest of Genesee County before the switch to Flint River Water.
 - After the switch to Flint River Water, rates in the high risk Zip codes were 3.2 times that of the rest of Genesee County.
- Other Zip codes in Flint
 - Rates of elevated blood lead levels among children under six years of age in other parts of the city of Flint were 2 times that of the rest of Genesee County before the switch to Flint River Water.
 - The magnitude of the elevated rate remained roughly the same during the period after the water source switch.
- Lead abatement through MDHHS was federally funded up until FY14 when Michigan began providing additional funds to abate homes.
- In FY14, \$1.25M General Fund was added. In FY15, General Fund was bumped up to \$1.75M and FY16, General Fund remains at \$1.75M.

Water Filters

- Our first action item is to work closely with our public and private partners to provide water filters to Flint residents and MDHHS clients.
- To meet this priority, the governor identified one million dollars in state funding to purchase water filters for Flint residents.
- Free water filters are available to current Michigan Department of Health and Human Services clients and Flint residents at four locations:
 - Flint residents who are not current MDHHS clients should visit one of two Genesee County Community Action Resource Department offices to obtain a filter.
 - at 2727 Lippincott and 601 North Saginaw in Flint
 - Current MDHHS clients in the city of Flint should visit their local MDHHS office
 - At 125 E. Union St. or 4809 Clio Road
- Staff will be onsite at all four locations from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, to distribute filters and assist residents who have questions about proper installation.

- Given the questions and concerns regarding the change in water source in Flint, MDHHS authorized the use of emergency services funding to provide water filters for MDHHS clients receiving assistance in the city of Flint.
- This funding will support active Family Independence Program (FIP), Food Assistance Program (FAP), Child Development and Care (CDC), State Disability Assistance (SDA), State Disability Assistance (SDA), or Social Security Insurance (SSI) recipients so that they can obtain filters that are National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) certified to remove lead and ANSI Standard 53.
- MDHHS currently serves approximately 25,000 households in Flint.

Reducing and Removing Lead Exposure

- In housing built before 1978, it can be assumed that the paint has lead unless tests show otherwise.
- Make sure your child does not have access to peeling paint or chewable surfaces painted with lead-based paint.
- Children and pregnant women should not be present in housing built before 1978 that is undergoing renovation. They should not participate in activities that disturb old paint or in cleaning up paint debris after work is completed.
- Create barriers between living/play areas and lead sources. Until environmental clean-up is completed, you should clean and isolate all sources of lead.
 - Close and lock doors to keep children away from chipping or peeling paint on walls. You can also apply temporary barriers such as contact paper or duct tape, to cover holes in walls or to block children's access to other sources of lead.
- Regularly wash children's hands and toys. Hands and toys can become contaminated from household dust or exterior soil. Both are known lead sources.
- Regularly wet-mop floors and wet-wipe window components. Because household dust is a major source of lead, you should wet-mop floors and wet-wipe horizontal surfaces every 2-3 weeks.
 - Windowsills and wells can contain high levels of leaded dust. They should be kept clean. If feasible, windows should be shut to prevent abrasion of painted surfaces or opened from the top sash.
- Take off shoes when entering the house to prevent bringing lead-contaminated soil in from outside.
- Prevent children from playing in bare soil; if possible, provide them with sandboxes. Plant grass on areas of bare soil or cover the soil with grass seed, mulch, or wood chips, if possible.
 - Until the bare soil is covered, move play areas away from bare soil and away from the sides of the house. If you have a sandbox, cover the box when not in

use to prevent cats from using it as a litter box. That will help protect children from exposure to animal waste.

- Avoid using makeup, containers, cookware, or tableware to store or cook foods or liquids that are not shown to be lead free.
- Remove recalled toys and toy jewelry immediately from children.
- Use only cold water from the tap for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula. Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead. Most of the lead in household water usually comes from the plumbing in your house, not from the local water supply.
- Shower and change clothes after finishing a task that involves working with lead-based products such as stained glass, making bullets, or using a firing range.

WIC Children

- There are 855 infants participating in WIC in Flint.
- We are working with partners at the United Way to ensure that WIC families have access to water filters and bottled water.
- In homes with infants on WIC, if the household has documentation from an official source of unsanitary water supply issues, that family may be eligible to receive ready-to-feed formula. Families should contact WIC to see if they are eligible.
- Each household would have to be looked at on an individual basis.
- WIC cannot cover bottled water.

Background

- The results of the Hurley Children's Hospital were reviewed by MDHHS after the study was released last week.
- The analysis that Hurley conducted was different from the initial MDHHS data regarding blood lead levels in Flint.
- MDHHS initial data looked at the entire blood lead levels for the Flint area for the past five years and showed the annual seasonal trends in the area.
- Seasonal exposure is higher in the summer for a variety of reasons including children playing outside in the soil, and when windows are open and lead paint is more likely to be in the air. Further, seasonal variations in water can occur due to changes in temperature, pH, and other factors