

## Universal Blood Lead Testing: Questions and Answers for Parents, Caregivers and the Public

In October 2023, two laws were passed that require physicians to: (1) test, or order a test, for lead in blood of minors at selected ages and with certain risk factors, and (2) ensure that test results are available in minors' certificates of immunization. This age-based approach to blood lead testing requirements for all children is commonly called "universal testing."

MDHHS must establish administrative rules to implement the laws. Requirements do not go into effect until the rules are established, which is expected to take place in mid- to late-2024. The following questions and answers provide information about the laws.

### What is Universal Blood Lead Testing?

Universal blood lead testing means testing all children at certain ages, no matter their risk for lead exposure.

### What is required under Michigan's new universal blood lead testing laws?

- All Michigan children must be tested for lead exposure at 12 and 24 months of age (i.e., age 1 and 2). If there is no record of a previous test, children must be tested for lead exposure between age 24 and 72 months (i.e., age 6).
- Physicians must make sure that the child's blood lead test results are included in the child's immunization certificate.
- Parents/legal guardians may opt out of the testing.
- MDHHS must establish administrative rules that will:

- Identify high-risk areas for lead poisoning in the state. Children living in these areas must also be tested at age 4.
- Define factors that identify children at high risk for lead poisoning and at what intervals children at high risk should receive additional tests.
- The testing requirements will not go into effect until the rules are established.

### How is universal testing different from Michigan’s targeted testing approach to blood lead testing, which has been in place for several years?

Prior to universal testing, Michigan used a targeted testing approach for children under 6 years of age. This required testing of people enrolled in Medicaid or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and optional testing for all others, if they have been determined by their physician to be at risk of lead exposure based on a risk screening questionnaire. With universal testing, *all* young children will be required to be tested at specified ages. People living in high-risk areas or with certain risk factors must have additional testing.

### Where can the public read the two laws related to universal blood lead testing of children?

- [Public Act 146 of 2023](#) amends Part 54A of the Public Health Code by adding a new subsection, [MCL 333.5474d](#), that requires a physician to test or order a blood lead test for a minor at age 12 and 24 months and under several other circumstances and to make an entry of the testing on the minor’s certificate of immunization.
- [Public Act 145 of 2023](#) amends MCL 333.9206 by adding a requirement for the entry of the blood lead test on a minor’s certificate of immunization in subsection [9206\(1\)](#).

### When will the administrative rules be completed?

- MDHHS is in the process of establishing the rules and will announce when that process is completed in mid- to late-2024.
- The public will have opportunities to review and comment on the draft rules before they are established.

### What are the reasons for changing from targeted testing to requiring universal testing?

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has determined there is no known safe level of lead in a child's blood, which is a metal that can damage normal brain functions. Lead exists in all soil in Michigan and in many homes. Universal testing aims to identify as early as possible all children with lead exposure as children begin to move around in their environment. The goal is to ensure children at risk of lead exposure have been identified through a blood lead test. Professionals with expertise in child lead poisoning prevention agree that the targeted testing approach does not achieve this goal. Some other states already moved from targeted testing policies to mandated universal testing for the same reasons.

### How will the change to universal blood lead testing impact the number of children who have blood lead tests?

- The universal blood lead testing approach will increase the number of children tested and, therefore, identify more children with lead exposure. This will allow for interventions for individual children and inform communitywide efforts to reduce lead exposure in communities at high risk.

### Will health insurers cover the costs of the blood lead tests under these new mandates?

- Blood lead testing is a preventive health service under the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA), meaning it must be covered without additional copayment or coinsurance charges. Most private insurers are covered by the ACA.

### What is a blood lead test and what does it measure?

- A blood lead test measures the amount of lead in a person's blood.
- The "Learn about lead" menu near the top of the website, [Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe), explains how blood is obtained for the test and why the test is important to protect children's health.

### Why should children be tested at 12 and 24 months of age, or between 24 and 72 months if not tested previously?

- Testing at 12 and 24 months helps identify early exposure.
- Blood lead levels peak around 24 months when children become more mobile, use hand-to-mouth movements and explore their environments, all of which put them at the greatest risk of lead exposure.
- Testing at these ages allows for early detection of lead exposure and intervention.

- The catch-up provision of testing by age 6 if not tested previously helps ensure that no child with lead exposure goes undetected.

**Where can the public go to learn more about blood lead testing, risk factors for lead exposure and lead exposure prevention?**

Visit [Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe).

For more information about the universal blood lead testing requirements, contact the MDHHS Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 517-335-8885 or [MDHHS-CLPPP@michigan.gov](mailto:MDHHS-CLPPP@michigan.gov).

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