



NEWS RELEASE

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Blood-Lead Testing Extremely Important

[MARQUETTE]—Parents worry about many things in their children’s lives, but lead poisoning is often not one of them. Michigan health plans have designated May 19 as *Lead-Testing Awareness Day* to call attention to the risks of childhood lead poisoning. Testing is extremely important, because a blood-lead test is the only way to determine if someone has lead poisoning.

Ten counties in the Upper Peninsula have a high risk for childhood lead poisoning, according to Anne B. Levandoski, R.N., of the Upper Peninsula Health Plan, citing data from the Michigan Department of Community Health. They are Baraga, Delta, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Luce, Menominee, Ontonagon, and Schoolcraft. The other five counties contain specific areas classified as high-risk. In 2004, 29 Upper Peninsula children (younger than 6) were found to have elevated blood-lead levels.

Children can be exposed to lead in many ways, including paint dust, peeling paint, and water pipes and other fixtures manufactured before 1986. Levandoski advises parents to help prevent lead poisoning by dusting homes often with a damp cloth, by getting themselves tested when they become pregnant, and by eating and serving foods rich in iron and calcium.

The Michigan Statewide Lead Testing and Lead Screening Plan calls for children enrolled in Medicaid to be tested for lead at 12 and 24 months of age, as well as children 3–6 years who have not been tested before. All children living in high-risk areas should have a blood-lead test or a risk evaluation.

