



Iowa Department of Public Health

Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance Program

Program Overview and Resource List

The Iowa Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance (ABLES) program reviews all blood lead test results for Iowans who are 16 years of age or older. The purpose of the program is to monitor the number of Iowa adults with elevated blood lead levels (EBLs), with a long-range goal of reducing the number of EBL adults in Iowa. ABLES summarizes test data about how adults are exposed to lead in Iowa and advises people how to reduce lead exposure in the workplace and at home. Lead exposure – even at levels previously considered safe – can cause serious acute and chronic health problems for adults as well as children. Iowa Public Health currently defines a venous blood lead test of 5 µg/dL (micrograms per deciliter) or higher as an elevated blood lead level for an adult in Iowa.

Blood lead data for 2018 are available by year and county on the ABLES web page. In 2018 Iowans with elevated blood lead levels included 10 people with blood lead levels (BLLs) of 40 µg/dL or higher, 156 with BLLs of 25-39 µg/dL, 627 with BLLs of 10-24 µg/dL and 339 with BLLs of 5-9 µg/dL. Those 1,132 EBLs add up to 30.5% of the adults tested in Iowa in 2018. Adults at risk of lead exposure are the most likely to be tested. Adults with a low risk of exposure are not routinely tested.

Most Iowa adult lead exposures are from work-related exposures in manufacturing, metal and electronic recycling, construction, residential or commercial renovation work and radiator repair work. Additionally, a number of adults are exposed through hobby activities involving firearms and casting or reloading ammunition. A limited number of adults are exposed through contaminated Ayurvedic, complementary and alternative medication or supplement use. Other routes of exposure are identified each year.

When an Iowan 16 years of age or older has an elevated venous blood lead level greater than 20 µg/dL for the first time, the IDPH ABLES program attempts to identify the source of the exposure. This follow-up is done by phone, fax or mail contact to medical providers or to the individual to obtain information such as employer (industry), job duties (occupation), or other missing information required under the Iowa Administrative Code [641] Chapter 1. First time EBL reports of 5-19 µg/dL may also have follow-up as IDPH resources allow. ABLES offers lead-poisoned adults one-on-one information to help them understand the risks of their lead exposure and ideas to reduce future exposure. Confidentiality is maintained throughout the case follow-up process. We can provide general information or make referrals to employers about preventing exposure and to medical providers about screening and treatment.

Many Iowa children are lead poisoned by swallowing or breathing dust, chips, or soil contaminated by the lead-based paint used in homes built before 1978. Children and family members of lead-exposed workers may also be at risk of lead exposure brought home as dust on a person's work clothing or found in the vehicle driven to and from work. Information is available to help adults decrease this risk of take-home lead. Pregnant women or children less than 6 years of age in the home of an adult with an elevated blood lead level should talk to their medical provider as soon as possible to arrange testing for lead exposure.

Bureau of Environmental Health Services
Occupational Health & Safety Surveillance Program
Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology & Surveillance

<https://idph.iowa.gov/Environmental-Health-Services/Occupational-Health-and-Safety-Surveillance/Adult-Blood-Lead-Epidemiology>

Kathy Leinenkugel: 515-281-4930 or 800-972-2026 Fax: 515-281-4529 kathy.leinenkugel@idph.iowa.gov

Resources for Use by You, your Employer, or your Medical Provider:

Iowa Department of Public Health Occupational Health & Safety Surveillance Program (OHSSP)

Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology & Surveillance (ABLES): idph.iowa.gov – search for adult lead or

<https://idph.iowa.gov/Environmental-Health-Services/Occupational-Health-and-Safety-Surveillance/Adult-Blood-Lead-Epidemiology>

800-972-2026 Fax (secure): 515-281-4529

Program Manager: Kathy Leinenkugel, 515-281-4930 kathy.leinenkugel@idph.iowa.gov

The IDPH ABLES program is available to answer general questions or provide information and education regarding adult lead exposure for individuals, employers and medical providers. Contact the office for more information about mandatory reporting requirements of all blood lead tests and how to report. A link to the Iowa Administrative Code [641] Chapter 1 is posted on the Iowa ABLES web page.

IDPH Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program: idph.iowa.gov – search for child lead or

<https://idph.iowa.gov/Environmental-Health-Services/Childhood-Lead-Poisoning-Prevention/What-is-Lead-Poisoning>

Iowa Lead Certification: The IDPH Lead Program oversees formal training of lead inspectors, lead abatement contractors, and anyone doing renovation or repair work on housing and child-occupied facilities built prior to 1978.

- Lead Professional Certification information: idph.iowa.gov – search for lead certification or <https://idph.iowa.gov/Environmental-Health-Services/Lead-Professional-Certification>
- Answers to frequently asked questions: <https://idph.iowa.gov/Environmental-Health-Services/Lead-Professional-Certification/FAQ>

National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH)

- NIOSH Lead web page www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/lead/
- NIOSH indoor firing ranges: www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ranges/
- NIOSH Health Hazard Evaluation Program and request information: www.cdc.gov/niosh/hhe/

Iowa Occupational Safety & Health Administration

- Iowa OSHA Consultation & Education: 515-281-7629 www.iowaosha.gov/iowa-osha-site-consultation
 - Information regarding OSHA Consultation's free and confidential services
- Iowa OSHA enforcement: 515-725-5621 www.iowaosha.gov/iowa-osha-enforcement
 - Workplace safety regulation and enforcement. For information on how to file a complaint, click on "File an Iowa OSHA Complaint" at the website.

Federal Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA)

- OSHA Lead Safety & Health Topics page: www.osha.gov/SLTC/lead/
- OSHA Lead in Construction document – 2003: www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3142.pdf
- OSHA Don't Take Home Lead Quick Card-2014: www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3680.pdf
- Medical Surveillance Lead in Construction Advisor: www.dol.gov/elaws/osha/lead/freqH.asp

Medical Resources

- Consult the **Iowa Statewide Poison Control Center** for medical treatment recommendations: 800-222-1222
- **IDPH ABLES** is available for questions regarding testing, retesting and general health issues related to lead exposure. Additional medical resources and references are listed on the Iowa ABLES web page.
- Adults at risk of lead exposure who are not tested under OSHA standards should request testing from their private medical provider. Contact IDPH ABLES for more information.
- All blood lead tests (child or adult) are required to be reported to IDPH by Iowa Code, including the person's home address and employer name if the test was done due to possible work exposure.
- There is no funding available through the IDPH ABLES program for adult blood lead testing.
- Adult lead tests should be drawn from a vein to avoid the contamination that can occur with capillary (fingerstick) specimens. Currently, venous specimens may not be tested using a Magellan LeadCare instrument.