



LEAD SAFETY TAKEAWAYS

MEDICAL CARE PROVIDERS

TIPS + REMINDERS

FOR COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

INDIVIDUAL VS. SYSTEMIC ISSUE

Discuss the issue of lead exposure as a systemic concern vs an individual failure. Make note that lead is a widespread problem and is present across Northeast Ohio. For instance, highlight the impact of housing conditions on lead exposure, emphasizing that it is a public health crisis with a housing solution.

EMPATHY AND AWARENESS

Empathize with families by acknowledging that many people are unaware of the prevalence of lead and its potential dangers. For example, explain that lead exposure can occur through undetectable particles such as lead dust. Reassure them children will not be taken away from their families because they have elevated blood lead levels.

PREVENTIVE NATURE OF LEAD POISONING

Emphasize that lead poisoning is 100% preventable and discuss the importance of proactive measures to address this issue.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Approach the communication with cultural sensitivity to avoid perpetuating stigma. For instance, consider the cultural context of the families and tailor the messaging to be respectful and inclusive.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Provide information about available resources and support services to address lead exposure, ensuring families know where to seek help and guidance. Promote opportunities to make homes learning-rich and community-connected.

CLARITY ABOUT FOLLOW-UP

Provide as much clarity about who will follow up, especially after a confirmed elevated test.

SCREENING + TESTING

Families are often unaware of the requirements for lead testing. Share with them that screening & testing children for lead is part of the pediatrician's role.

Walk families through the lab testing process (if done in a separate facility) so it does not become a deterrent and how to prepare for the test.

TALKING POINTS:

- **There are two types of test, finger-prick and venous test. Finger-prick is a small amount of blood taken from the child's finger or heel.** This type of test can provide fast results. If the capillary test is high, a second test or venous draw is needed to confirm the lead level in the blood.
- **If a venous test is needed, a blood draw from the child's vein.** You may need to go to a laboratory facility and it may take a few days to receive results. This test is used to confirm blood lead levels seen in the first capillary test.

Emphasize the requirement and importance of asking for lead testing from the provider side even if the child is healthy.

Encourage subsequent well-child visits regardless of test status to continue to check in and keep the child healthy.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE TEST

- A follow-up from the Ohio Department of Health or your local health department for a lead investigation is not meant to be punitive but required by law.
- Parents may feel some guilt if their child tests positive. Remember to be empathetic and reassure them that it is not their fault.
- Supply them with resources and tips on how to manage an elevated blood lead level
- Encourage families to feed their child a well-balanced diet with a variety of foods rich in calcium and iron
- Cleaning techniques
- Encourage them to talk to childcare providers or educators about interventions

