What Child Care Providers Need to Know About Lead

New York State has regulations for child care providers to help protect children from lead. Lead is a poison that is especially dangerous for young children. Lead poisoning can cause long-term problems with a child’s growth, behavior, and ability to learn. A blood lead test is the only way to know if a child has lead poisoning. The regulations are designed to promote lead testing and education.

Who is affected by these regulations?
All child care providers licensed and registered by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services, as well as nursery and preschool providers.

What must child care providers do?
Before or within three months of enrolling a child who is between the ages of one and six years old, providers must try to obtain proof from the parent or guardian that the child has been tested for lead.

What proof of lead testing is needed?
Proof can be anything signed by the medical provider stating the date of the test. This could be an Office of Children and Family Services “Medical Statement of Child in Childcare” form (OCFS-LOSS-4433), or an immunization record with a lead test date.

What if parents cannot provide proof of testing?
Children may attend childcare without proof of a lead test. If the parent or guardian cannot provide proof of testing, NYS regulations require the provider to do the following:

- Document any referrals and information provided in the child’s record.
- Try to obtain proof of lead testing from the parent or guardian. If you are still unable to obtain proof, NYS regulations require you to:
  - Keep children away from peeling paint and paint chips.
  - Regulations for child care providers state that peeling or damaged paint or plaster must be repaired promptly. Before making repairs on a building built before 1978, contact your local health department to learn how to keep dust levels down during the repair.
  - Children and pregnant individuals should stay away from repairs that disturb old paint, such as sanding or scraping. They should stay away until the area is cleaned using wet cleaning methods and a HEPA vacuum (not dry sweeping).

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When should children be tested for lead?
New York State regulations require medical providers to test children for lead at age one year and again at age two years. They must also assess children for lead risk at each well-child visit, and test children up to age six years if a risk for lead poisoning is found. Please tell parents about these requirements and the importance of lead testing.

Where can you get more information on lead poisoning prevention?
Call your local health department, listed in the phone book blue pages. In New York City and Rochester, call 311.
Visit the Department of Health website at: www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead.

See other side to learn how to protect the children in your care from lead.

Protecting Children in Your Child Care From Lead

Most childhood lead poisoning occurs when children swallow or breathe in dust from old lead paint. Most buildings built before 1978 have lead-based paint. Children who live, or spend a lot of time, in buildings built before 1978 are at the highest risk for lead poisoning. If your child care facility was built before 1978, consider having it tested for lead hazards by an EPA-certified firm. Contact your local health department for a list of EPA-certified firms. The following steps can also help protect your children:

- Fix peeling lead paint and make building repairs safely.
- Wash dust off hands, toys, bottles, windows and floors.
- Be careful about contact with lead from toys, jewelry, old furniture, and outside play areas.
- Keep lead out of your food and tap water.
- Serve foods that have calcium, iron, and vitamin C.

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- Wash children's hands and face after play, before meals, and before bed.
- Wash toys, stuffed animals, pacifiers and bottles with soap and water often.
- Mop floors often, and use damp paper towels to clean window wells and sills.
- Cover bare soil with grass or woodchips. Don’t let children play in bare soil.
- Paint and varnish can be on old painted toys, high chairs, and furniture. Regulations for child care providers ban the use of toxic paints or finishes on anything that children use or is within their reach.
- Don’t let children chew on metal, brass, lead or pewter objects such as keys or figurines, fishing weights, mini-blinds, old furniture, or window sills.
- Let tap water run for one minute before using it, if it hasn’t been run for a few hours. Both town and well water could have lead from old plumbing.
- Only use cold tap water for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula. Boiling water does not get rid of lead.
- Use lead-free dishes. Don’t cook, serve, or store food in cracked china, or in pewter, crystal, or pottery from Central America or the Middle East.
- Lead is in some imported spices, candy, cosmetics, and traditional medicines.
- These foods help keep lead from being stored in a child’s body.
  - Foods with calcium: milk, cheese, yogurt, tofu, and green, leafy vegetables.
  - Foods with iron: beans, lean meat, fortified cereal and peanut butter.
  - Foods with vitamin C: oranges, orange juice, grapefruit, tomatoes, green peppers.
  - The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) helps child care providers pay for nutritious meals. Call 5-800-942-3858 or (518) 402-7400.

Teach your children and parents about lead poisoning prevention. www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/lead
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