

Health Notification

Lead Level Screenings in Young Children Are Now Mandatory

August 6, 2019

On May 23, 2019, Philadelphia City Council passed into law Bill 180937-A, which amends Chapter 6-200 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Preventive Medicine," to establish requirements for the testing of blood lead levels in children. **The law is effective immediately.**

The law's requirements state that lead testing of all children in certain age groups is now mandatory, regardless of insurance coverage.

- A physician treating a child between the ages of nine to 21 months, who has not previously been tested for lead, is required to test the child at the first practical opportunity.
- A physician treating a child between the ages of 21 and 72 months whose blood lead level has not been tested once after the age of 21 months is required to test the child's blood lead level at the first practical opportunity.

The two exemptions with this bill are as follows:

- A child shall not be tested in connection with a treatment visit if the physician or his or her designee certifies in writing that blood lead level testing may be detrimental to the health of the child.
- A child shall not be tested if the child's parent or guardian objects in writing to the testing on religious, moral, ethical or other grounds.

In addition, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have stringent requirements for lead screening.

- All children enrolled in Medicaid are required to receive blood lead screening tests at ages 12 months and 24 months.
- Any child between 24 and 72 months with no record of a previous blood lead level must be screened.

Completion of a risk assessment questionnaire does not meet the Medicaid requirement. The Medicaid requirement is met only when the two blood lead screening tests identified above (or a catch-up blood lead screening test) are conducted.

Questions or comments about the new law can be directed to Philadelphia's Lead and Healthy Homes Program at 215-685-2788. Information about lead and childhood lead poisoning can be accessed [here](#).