

Lead Poisoning Information Sheet

Lead poisoning occurs when children ingest lead. Even small amounts of lead can cause serious health problems. Children under the age of six are especially vulnerable to lead poisoning, which can severely affect mental and physical development. At very high levels, lead poisoning can be fatal.

Lead-contaminated dust, water and lead-based paint chips are the most common sources of lead poisoning in children. The Consumer Product Safety Commission reported that lead is in some types of children's jewelry, toys, candy wrappers and playground equipment. Since 2004, the Commission has recalled over 150 million pieces of toy jewelry sold in vending machines and through other outlets. (University of Maryland Medicine)

Symptoms

Lead poisoning can be difficult to detect. Signs and symptoms usually do not appear until dangerous amounts have accumulated. Symptoms include:

- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Constipation
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Learning difficulties

Treatment

When a child is diagnosed with lead poisoning, it is important to find the source and remove it. Treatment includes Chelation therapy in which the patient is given medication that binds with lead in the body. When the child urinates, the lead leaves the body.

Educational Implications

Exposure to lead can cause irreversible damage to the brain, as well as damage to the kidneys and nervous system. High levels can cause seizures, unconsciousness and death.

Some children with lead poisoning may be easily distracted, less organized, less diligent with schoolwork and less able to follow directions.

Educational Options

Those students whose lead poisoning adversely affects their educational performance may benefit from special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To qualify under IDEA, a student must meet eligibility criteria in one of thirteen specific disability categories. Under IDEA, a student with a disability is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and an individualized education program, including individual goals, objectives, related services, accommodations and modifications.

Students that do not qualify for services under IDEA may qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. To qualify under Section 504, a student must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (for example learning, breathing, thinking, concentrating, walking, bodily functions). Under Section 504, a student is entitled to equal opportunity, and may qualify for a Section 504 plan that provides regular or special education and related aids and services.

A student with a health condition who does not require special instruction and related services can receive, as appropriate, a wide range of supports in the general education classroom, including accommodations, individualized health plans (IHP), emergency care plans (ECP) and local education agency supports.