

Blood Lead Levels in Children

2022 Statewide Data Summary

November 2023

Background

Lead is a toxic metal that can be found throughout a child’s environment. Lead exposure in children can cause learning, behavioral, and health problems. Lead in blood has been shown to affect children’s school performance, ability to pay attention, and IQ. The harmful effects of childhood lead exposure can be prevented. A blood lead test is the best way to know if a child is exposed to lead.

Blood Lead Level Surveillance

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS), Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program maintains a blood lead level surveillance system. All blood lead tests performed by health care providers are required to be reported to NDHHS within seven (7) days regardless of test result, sample type, or patient age.¹

The following tables summarizes statewide blood lead surveillance data among children less than six (6) years old from calendar years 2018 to 2022. From 2012 to 2021 the blood lead reference value was 5.0 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL). In October 2021 the CDC approved a new reference value of 3.5 µg/dL and the new reference value was adopted in Nebraska in 2022. The reference value is used to identify children with blood lead levels (BLL) that are higher than most children's levels.

Children ≤ 6 years old tested with blood lead level, Nebraska, 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of Children Tested	36,345	39,175	33,756	33,503	34,360
Population	158,948	157,848	155,269	152,302	150,000
Percent of Children Tested	22.9%	24.8%	21.7%	22.0%	22.9%

Children ≤ 6 years old with blood lead level at or above the reference value, Nebraska, 2018-2022

	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
Reference Value	5 µg/dL		5 µg/dL		5 µg/dL		5 µg/dL		3.5 µg/dL	
Case Status	#	% of tested	#	% of tested	#	% of tested	#	% of tested	#	% of tested
Confirmed Cases	417	1.1%	407	1.0%	331	1.0%	299	0.9%	602	1.8%
Suspect Cases	425	1.2%	353	0.9%	256	0.8%	189	0.6%	548	1.6%
Total Cases	842	2.3%	760	1.9%	587	1.7%	488	1.5%	1,150	3.3%

Note: Data are provisional and subject to change. Children are only counted once per year. For more information about confirmed and suspect case definitions, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/data/case-definitions-classifications.htm>. Data Sources: Source: Nebraska DHHS, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, Blood Lead Surveillance System. Population data for 2012 to 2019 compiled from CDC Vintage 2019 bridged race postcensal estimates released by NCHS. Population data for 2020-2022 from Single-race Population Estimates released by the Census Bureau.

¹Nebraska Reportable Disease Regulations Title 173 Chapter 1

For More Information

For more information about lead exposures in Nebraska, visit www.dhhs.ne.gov/lead