

## **Protecting Your Family from Lead Poisoning**

Lead poisoning can seriously affect your child's health. Learn how to protect your children from lead poisoning.

### **How is my child exposed to lead?<sup>1</sup>**

Lead poisoning is mainly caused by exposure to lead-based paint and lead-filled dust found in older buildings. Lead-based paints were banned in 1978 for use in housing, but 24 million housing units in this country still have leaded paint and high levels of dust with lead. Keep your children away from older homes if you can. Keep them away from old paint that is chipping. Other sources of lead poisoning include:

- Home health remedies such as arzacón and greta (used for upset stomach) or pay-loo-ah (used for fever or rash).
- Imported candies (especially from Mexico).
- Imported toy jewelry.
- Drinking water. Brass fixtures, lead pipes or solder and valves can leak lead into drinking water.
- Parents who work at a job using lead (car battery plants, radiator shops or construction) can bring home lead on their work clothes.

### **What are the signs of lead poisoning?<sup>2</sup>**

Lead poisoning can be hard to detect. Sometimes there are no signs. Signs may appear only when unsafe levels of lead have built up. If your child shows any of the following signs and you think he or she was exposed to lead, call your doctor right away:

- Irritable
- Weight loss or loss of appetite
- Sluggish
- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Constipation



## Is my child at risk?<sup>3,4</sup>

All children enrolled in Medicaid must have a lead test at both 1 and 2 years of age. They must take a lead test at least once by age 6, or if they are at risk. If you check one or more of the boxes below, have your child take a blood lead levels (BLL) test right away. Does your child:

- Visit or live in a house built before 1978 that is being or will be remodeled?
- Have a brother, sister or friend who has had lead poisoning?
- Visit or live in a house that has chipping, peeling, dusting or chalking paint?
- Visit or live in a house built before 1978 (such as a day care center, the home of a babysitter or relative, or a preschool)?
- Often visit an adult who works with lead (such as pottery, painting, construction or welding)?

## Can lead poisoning be prevented?<sup>5, 6</sup>

*Yes!* To help prevent lead poisoning, keep your child from coming into contact with lead, and treat children who have been poisoned by lead right away. Also, make sure you take your child to the doctor for a BLL test at the right age or if he or she is at risk.

## We are here to help you.

Call your doctor or your local health department to find out how to get a BLL test. You also can call MedCall®, the 24-hour nurse help line, call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at **1-800-232-4636**, or visit **www.cdc.gov** on the Web. For more facts about lead poisoning, call the National Lead Information Center at **1-800-424-5323**.

### BlueChoice HealthPlan Medicaid

Customer Care Center: **1-866-781-5094**

TTY line: **1-866-773-9634**

MedCall: **1-866-577-9710**

TTY line: **1-800-368-4424**

**www.bluechoicescmedicaid.com**

TTY lines are only for members with hearing and speech loss.



Medicaid

Sources: <sup>1,3</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Lead Prevention Tips* (Accessed August 2009): <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/Lead/tips.htm>  
<sup>2,4,5,6</sup>Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ATSDR), *Lead Toxicity: How Should Patients Exposed to Lead Be Evaluated?* (Accessed August 2009): [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/csem/lead/pbpatient\\_evaluation2.html](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/csem/lead/pbpatient_evaluation2.html)

This information is being provided for general information purposes only and is not the practice of medicine or a substitute for the independent medical judgment of a treating physician. Only a treating physician can determine what treatment is appropriate for a patient. BlueChoice HealthPlan is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. ® BlueChoice, BlueCross, BlueShield and the Cross and Shield symbols are registered marks of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

® MedCall is a registered mark of WellPoint, Inc. Medicaid managed care administered by WellPoint Partnership Plan, LLC, an independent company. ©2010