



September 5, 2019

Dear Families,

Welcome to the 2019–20 school year!

In New York City public schools, it is our priority to keep kids healthy and safe. As part of our continued effort to protect children from exposure to lead, the Department of Education (DOE) regularly inspects, tests and fixes classrooms serving children under age six in school buildings constructed prior to 1985. We look for damaged paint, as lead-based paint presents a risk when it is peeling, chipped, or cracked. This summer, we conducted citywide testing, and we are pleased to inform you that any required remediation has been completed, and that these classrooms are cleared for use on the first day of school.

This summer, the Division of School Facilities inspected all classrooms serving students under age six in buildings constructed before 1985. We tested all peeling or damaged paint in these classrooms for lead and used standard safety protocols to repair any lead-based paint. We then did further testing after the paint has been stabilized to make sure rooms are safe for children to enter. This is called remediation. We will continue to visually inspect classrooms throughout the year, and moving forward, we will be expanding our testing and remediation to include common spaces, such as cafeterias and libraries.

To help you stay informed, we have attached frequently asked questions about lead safety in DOE schools, as well as information on lead exposure and links to additional resources. For paint-inspection results, please visit [schools.nyc.gov/lead-paint-results](https://schools.nyc.gov/lead-paint-results). For more information, visit [schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/lead-based-paint](https://schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/lead-based-paint) or speak with your school's principal.

We wish you and your children a wonderful first day—and we will continue to work hard to keep our 1.1 million students safe.

Sincerely,

Ursulina Ramirez  
Chief Operating Officer

## **Department of Education Lead Safety Frequently Asked Questions**

**Why was testing and repair work completed only in classrooms serving children under six?** The work to survey paint conditions and repair any peeling paint focused on classroom serving children under age six because young children are most at risk—children under three years old are

the most susceptible and vulnerable to the health effects of lead, and children under age six are at higher risk than older children.

### **Why was testing only completed in buildings constructed before 1985?**

Our standard response protocol keeps kids safe and applies to all classrooms serving students under six in buildings constructed before 1985. Although lead-based paint was banned in New York City in 1960, we take additional precautions and include in our monitoring any building constructed 25 years after that ban.

### **What is DOE's testing protocol? Is it aligned with Health Code requirements?**

Surveys for peeling paint and the repair of any lead-based paint are conducted according to the requirements of the New York City Health Code.

All schools serving children under six years old, constructed in 1985 or earlier, are visually inspected by custodial engineers who flag for testing any peeling paint found in classrooms. In addition, at the end of the 2018–19 school year, we did another round of inspections on all 3-K, Pre-K, Kindergarten, and LYFE Center classrooms, and tested any peeling or damaged paint in these classrooms for lead. Any lead-based peeling paint was addressed by EPA certified contractors.

### **How can I learn whether my school was impacted?**

You can view an individual school's testing results via the Lead-Based Paint page on the DOE website: [schools.nyc.gov/lead-paint-results](https://schools.nyc.gov/lead-paint-results).

### **My school was on the list of impacted buildings. Should I be worried?**

No. The peeling lead-based paint in all classrooms serving children under age six has been repaired and we are ready for school to begin. You can continue to find the most up-to-date information on impacted buildings at [schools.nyc.gov/lead-paint-results](https://schools.nyc.gov/lead-paint-results).

### **I don't want my child to continue to attend this school. Can I transfer my child to a new program?**

All classrooms have been successfully remediated and the building is safe. As always, you can visit a Family Welcome Center to explore available school options. To find one near you, visit: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/family-welcome-centers>.

### **Are you reaching out to families whose children have been in impacted classrooms?**

Yes. The DOE has asked principals to reach out to all families of students under six that occupied these classrooms last year, or during the first few days of summer. The original letter alerting families of test results and next steps is available in 10 different languages and can be accessed online at: [schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/lead-based-paint](https://schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/lead-based-paint).

### **What should I do if I notice peeling or damaged paint in my child's school?**

If you notice peeling paint in one of our school buildings, we would like to hear from you. Please fill out the Paint Reporting survey available at [schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/lead-based-paint](https://schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/lead-based-paint)

and we will investigate. We'll need the building code, classroom number, and floor. You can find your building code by clicking your school's borough on the website above and typing in the address or school name.

### **My child attends a DOE-contracted community-based early childhood program. Did you test those programs too?**

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) inspects community-based child care programs. The DOHMH requires that programs be free of lead-based paint or that any lead-based paint be in good repair (that is, not peeling, chipped, or cracked). DOHMH conducts regular inspections to check whether there is peeling paint and conducts follow-up inspections to confirm any peeling paint has been repaired. Visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) and search "Child Care Connect" to find information about your community-based child care program's inspection history.

### **Do I need to be concerned about lead in my school's drinking water?**

No. New York City tap water is of the highest quality and arrives from upstate reservoirs that are virtually lead-free. The DOE tests the water used in schools for drinking and cooking, and turns off any fixture if the testing shows elevated lead levels until repairs are made and the water tests show there is no more elevation. State law requires the DOE to test the water for lead every five years. All schools either have been, or will be, retested from fall 2018 through 2020.

### **How can I ensure that my child is safe?**

Children under three years old are the most susceptible and vulnerable to the health effects of lead, and children under age six are at higher risk than older children. Discuss your child's health history with their doctor to determine if blood lead testing is appropriate. To secure free testing or to find a doctor, call 311.

## **Additional Information on Lead Exposure**

### **What are the health effects of lead?**

Lead is a metal that can harm children and adults when it gets into their bodies. Lead is a known neurotoxin. This means it is particularly harmful to the developing brain and nervous system of children under six years old. Lead can harm a young child's growth, behavior, and ability to learn. Lead exposure during pregnancy may contribute to low birth weight and developmental delays in infants. There are many sources of lead exposure in the environment, and it is important to reduce all lead exposures as much as possible.

### **What are the other sources of lead exposure?**

Lead is a metal that has been used for centuries for many purposes, resulting in widespread distribution in the environment. Major sources of lead exposure include lead-based paint in older housing, and lead that built up over decades in soil and dust due to historical use of lead in gasoline, paint, and manufacturing. Lead can also be found in a number of consumer products, including certain types of pottery, pewter, brass fixtures, foods, plumbing materials, and cosmetics. Lead

seldom occurs naturally in water supplies but drinking water could become a possible source of lead exposure if the building's plumbing contains lead. The primary source of lead exposure for most children with elevated blood-lead levels is lead-based paint.

### **Who is at risk for lead poisoning?**

Children under three years of age are the most susceptible and vulnerable to the health effects of lead. Lead also poses a risk to the developing fetus. Exposure to lead may interfere with a child's growth and development.

### **What do we know about rates of lead poisoning in New York City children?**

Rates of lead poisoning among NYC children have been falling. Since 2005, there has been close to a 90% decline in the number and rate of children under six years old with a blood lead level at or above 5 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL), the level at which the New York City Health Department investigates.

### **Additional Resources**

**For more information about lead safety in the Department of Education, go to:**  
[schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/lead-based-paint](https://schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/lead-based-paint)

**For information about lead and programs at the New York City Health Department, go to:**  
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/lead-poisoning-prevention.page>

**For information about New York State Department of Health Lead Poisoning Prevention, go to:** [health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/](https://health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/)

**For more information on blood lead testing and ways to reduce your child's risk of exposure to lead, see "What Your Child's Blood Lead Test Means":**  
[health.ny.gov/publications/2526/](https://health.ny.gov/publications/2526/) (available in 10 languages)