



**To:** Milwaukee Public Schools

**Attention:** MPS Parents, Guardians, and Staff

**Date:** February 6, 2025

**From:** Michael Totoraitis, PhD, Commissioner of Health, City of Milwaukee Health Department

Dear Milwaukee Public Schools Families and Staff,

The City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) has identified hazardous levels of lead contamination in multiple Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) buildings. These findings, uncovered through separate case investigations by our Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP), in consultation with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), confirm lead hazards inside MPS buildings that exceed state safety standards. As the city's public health authority, we must inform you that these findings pose an immediate and ongoing risk to the health and safety of students and staff.

---

### Lead Hazard Findings

In January 2025, MHD conducted lead risk assessments at multiple MPS locations in response to concerns raised by parents during elevated blood lead level (EBLL) investigations. Testing methods included visual inspections, XRF (X-ray fluorescence) testing, dust wipe sampling, soil sampling, and water sampling.

The results revealed widespread high lead dust wipe levels exceeding [DHS 163.15](#) standards for lead dust hazards on floors and sills that must be immediately addressed.

### What We Have Found

MHD's environmental health investigations have confirmed lead hazards in multiple MPS schools. The hazards include deteriorating lead-based paint and lead dust in classrooms, hallways, and common areas.

- **Golda Meir Lower Campus** – Lead-based paint hazards in the ground floor bathroom, hallway, teacher's lounge, and windowsills.
- **Kagel School** – Lead-based paint hazards in the ground floor windowsills and storage room floor.
- **Maryland Avenue Montessori** – Strong potential presence of deteriorated lead paint.

---

### Priority Recommendations for MPS

After extensive testing and review, MHD is urging MPS to immediately and significantly improve its detection, monitoring, and control of lead hazards. More than 85% of MPS buildings were constructed before 1980, when lead-based materials were commonly used. Under Wisconsin Administrative [Code PI 8.01\(i\)](#) under school district standards, the facilities shall be inspected at least annually for potential or demonstrated hazards to safety and health, and hazardous conditions shall be corrected, compensating devices installed or special arrangements made to provide for safe and healthful facilities.

MHD is calling on MPS to revise and strengthen its current Lead Management Plan, prioritize high-risk facilities for testing and remediation, fully abate and/or control identified lead hazards, review and update its

cleaning lead dust protocols, review and train staff on DHS lead-safe certifications, consider lead hazards from non-paint sources – like water, and proactively mitigate risks to students with developmental disorders.

---

### **What Families and Staff Should Do**

A blood test is the best way to determine if a child has been exposed to lead. Most children with lead in their blood have no obvious symptoms. **Children under the age of 6 are at highest risk, as they spend more time on the floor and exhibit the most hand to mouth behaviors.** MHD recommends routine blood lead testing for all children **around 12, 18, and 24 months, followed by annual testing at ages 3, 4, and 5.**

**Anyone 6 years and older with developmental needs or complex health conditions may need additional testing.**

If you have concerns about lead exposure, contact your primary care provider to learn about testing options.

### **Reducing Lead Exposure at Home**

- **Wash hands frequently** (before eating, after playing).
- **Use wet wipes to clean surfaces** to remove lead dust (floors, windows, furniture).
- **Remove shoes at the door** to prevent tracking in dirt with lead dust.
- **Wash toys frequently**, especially for very young children.
- **Provide iron, calcium, and vitamin C-rich foods** to help prevent lead absorption.
- **Run tap water on cold for three minutes** before using for drinking or cooking.
- **Purchase a water filter** certified to remove lead (NSF/ANSI 53).

### **Next Steps**

MHD will continue to monitor, investigate, and enforce public health protections across Milwaukee schools. MHD is in the process of determining if further lead screening is needed. We will keep the public informed of any updates.

For more information, and answers to frequently asked questions, visit [www.milwaukee.gov/HEH](http://www.milwaukee.gov/HEH).

Sincerely,



**Michael Totoraitis, PhD**  
Commissioner of Health  
City of Milwaukee Health Department

---

1: [Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder and Lead Poisoning: Diagnostic Challenges and Management Complexities - PMC](#)