

PROTECTING MILWAUKEE COMMUNITIES FROM LEAD HAZARDS

Tips for Effective Advocacy

Lead poisoning remains a critical public health crisis in Milwaukee. Each year, more than 1,000 of Milwaukee's children report a blood lead level greater than or equal to 3.5 µg/dL, meaning they are more poisoned than 97.5% of their peers nationwide. **Nearly 1 in 10 children will reach this level before their sixth birthday, putting them at risk for lifelong health, learning, and behavioral challenges.**

Though lead poisoning impacts society as a whole, lead hazards are concentrated in historically redlined and under-resourced areas. Research shows that children living in neighborhoods with more renters, higher poverty, and mostly non-White residents have blood lead levels 2 µg/dL higher than those in wealthier, majority-White neighborhoods with more homeowners.¹ Ensuring every child in Milwaukee grows up lead-safe, no matter their zip code, requires a shared commitment to addressing these disparities.

[1] Lynch, E. E., & Meier, H. C. S. (2020). The intersectional effect of poverty, home ownership, and racial/ethnic composition on mean childhood blood lead levels in Milwaukee County neighborhoods. PLoS one, 15(6), e0234995. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0234995>

Share Accurate Information and Resources

Families navigate a large amount of fast-changing health information every day. This can lead to confusion or delayed action, especially since lead hazards and symptoms often go undetected. Because many lead hazards are found at home, clear and accurate information is essential to prevent poisonings. You can help connect your community to information and resources to reduce risk. For specific concerns about lead exposure, refer people to CDC guidance or their primary care provider.



Research the issue

Stay up to date with information from MHD, Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Share resources for lead-safe homes

Wet cleaning, duct tape, HEPA vacuums, and NSF/ANSI Standard 53 water filters are tools to help reduce lead exposure. For information on free HEPA vacuum rentals, contact MHD Home Environmental Health at 414-286-2465.

Explore lead hazard abatement options

Federal funded grants are available through MHD and community partners to help property owners remove lead hazards. Visit online at milwaukee.gov/LeadPacket for full application details.

Get lead-safe certified

Training is available for lead hazard investigation and lead safe work practices. Visit online at dhs.wisconsin.gov/lead/training.htm for more information.

Promote universal blood lead testing

MHD's recently-revised policy recommends testing all children at 12, 18, and 24 months, and annually through age 5.

Partner with the Milwaukee Health Department

Submit a community engagement request at milwaukee.gov/Health/Contact/H9 to collaborate with MHD.

Use Storytelling for Health Impact

Lead poisoning affects thousands of Milwaukee families each year, yet awareness remains low. Many don't realize that lead hazards persist in older homes, soil, and water, or that even low exposure can cause lifelong harm. Families may feel shame or guilt for lead exposure, even though the issue stems from systemic failures. By sharing experiences, we can shift the focus from personal responsibility and strengthen community support.



Testify at public meetings

Share your experiences and advocate for stronger lead prevention measures at Milwaukee Common Council meetings, Milwaukee Public Schools board meetings, or Wisconsin state legislative hearings.

Contact elected officials

Write letters or emails to your local, state, and federal representatives to express concerns and push for policies that reduce lead exposure.

Use social and local media

Share personal stories, advocacy efforts, and key data to educate the public and policymakers. Consider submitting op-eds or letters to the editor to raise awareness.

Organize community workshops or events

Help educate and engage residents by hosting informational sessions or participating in annual National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week programming every October.

Advocate for Systems-Level Change

Though individual actions can help protect households, systems improvements are essential to protect Milwaukee as a whole. Childhood lead poisoning persists today due to gaps in housing and health policies. Your civic engagement with the policy process can lead to lasting change.



Connect with MKE Elevate

MHD's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) brings together city leaders, public health professionals, and community advocates to work together on common goals. Visit milwaukee.gov/elevate for more information.

Participate in public comment periods on lead-related policies

Provide input at all levels of government to ensure strong and effective lead prevention policies.

Advocate for increased funding

Support expanded funding for lead prevention programs, including public and private-sector investments.

Need more information?

Submit a request using our [online form](#)