

Newly Arrived Children from China with Elevated Blood Lead Levels

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The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is advising health care providers that two cases of significantly elevated blood lead levels among children recently adopted from China have been identified. In addition to the required blood lead testing of all children at age one and again at age two, NYS Public Health Law (PHL) requires health care providers to assess all children who are at least six months of age but less than six years of age, for risk of lead exposure. Children age six months to age six found to be at risk should receive a blood lead test following the assessment. Children who previously resided in a foreign country are considered to be at risk and should be tested as soon as possible after arrival in the United States.

The NYSDOH Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (LPPP) was notified of two young children under the age of one year who required chelation therapy due to elevated blood lead levels (EBLLS) > 45 mcg/dL very soon after they had arrived in New York (NY). Both children had been recently adopted from the same orphanage in Yiyang, Jiangxi Province, China and their families used the same adoption agency. Although no definitive source from China has yet been identified in these cases, it is our understanding that Jiangxi Province has industry, including mining and smelting operations that involve lead.

The parents of the two 11-month old females reported the adoption agency recommended blood lead testing. Approximately ten days after arrival in NY, the asymptomatic children were examined by their health care providers (HCPs). As recent arrivals from China, these children were considered to be at risk for lead exposure and a blood lead test was performed. One child's BLL result was 45 mcg/dL and the other was 55 mcg/dL. Both HCPs collaborated with their local health department's Lead Poisoning Prevention Program and a Regional Lead Resource Center regarding the EBLLs. The children were immediately hospitalized for inpatient chelation treatment. Environmental investigations were conducted at each child's residence. No lead based paint hazards, or other source of lead exposure was identified.

The Centers for Disease Control has reported over 100,000 children are adopted each year in the United States and many of these children are from overseas. In many countries outside the United States, the risk of lead exposure is much higher than in this country. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children who have been adopted or have emigrated from countries where lead poisoning is prevalent be tested for EBLLs upon arrival.

Additional information about lead poisoning prevention is available at:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/chi/chi28-suppl3.pdf>

www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/lead/

www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/adoption.htm

<http://adoption.state.gov/about/how/health.html>