

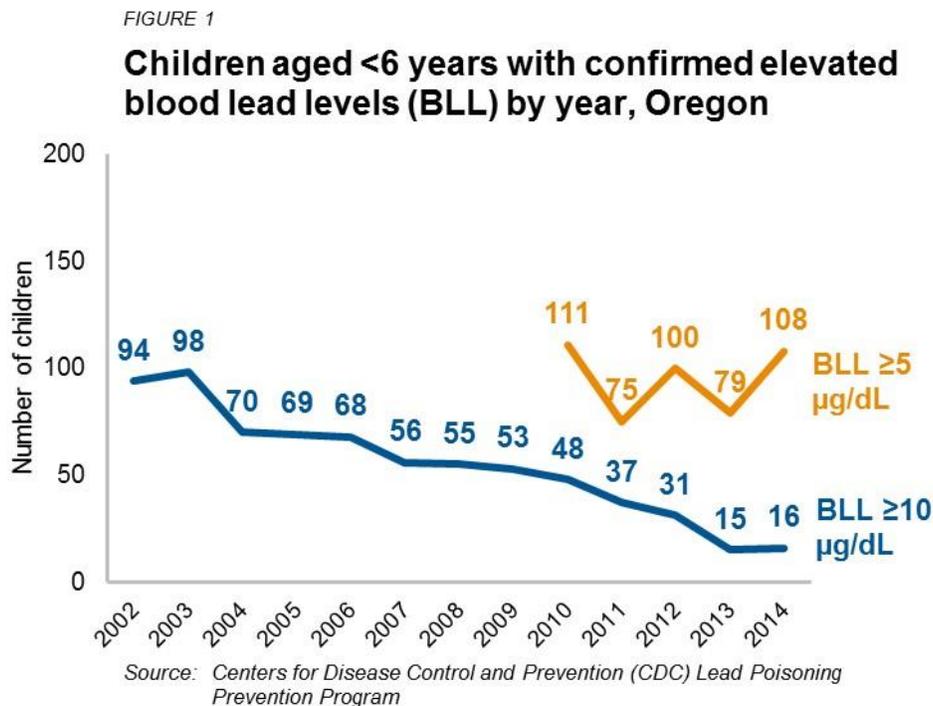
## Environment

# Elevated childhood blood lead levels

Lead is toxic to people of all ages, but young children are the most at risk for adverse health effects. Lead poisoning has neurological effects that are most damaging when the brain is developing rapidly in early childhood. The normal behaviors of children age <3 years — crawling, exploring and putting objects in their mouths — put them in contact with lead in their environment, and children absorb more lead into their bones than adults do.

In May 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revised the level at which children are considered to have too much lead in their blood. Based on the absence of an identified blood lead level (BLL) without deleterious effects, combined with the evidence that these effects appear to be irreversible, CDC eliminated the term “level of concern” and adopted a new BLL reference value of  $\geq 5 \mu\text{g/dL}$ .

From 2010-2014, a total of 473 Oregon children had confirmed BLLs of  $\geq 5 \mu\text{g/dL}$  (Figure 1). Of those children, 147 had confirmed elevated blood lead levels greater than or equal to  $10 \mu\text{g/dL}$ .



**Additional Resources:**

[CDC Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention. Recommendations of the Advisory Committee for Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention. Atlanta,GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2012](#)

[Oregon CD Summary: Childhood Lead Poisoning](#)

**About the Data:** As of 2011 all blood lead test results, regardless of level are notifiable by law in Oregon. The Oregon Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (OLPPP) submits data to the CDC on a quarterly basis. The data are available from:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/data/StateConfirmedByYear1997-2012.htm>

Data include confirmed blood lead levels where there is either one elevated venous test or two elevated capillary or unknown specimen tests <12 weeks apart for the child.

In Oregon, only “at-risk” children, based on risk assessment questioning at age 1–2 years, are targeted for testing. The annual testing rate is approximately 4% of all children less than 3 years old.

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[Oregon State Health Profile](#)

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