

Reaching Out

TRAIL
HEALTH &
ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE



Winter 2008

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Blood Lead Levels in Trail Children Meet the Goal

The 2007 blood lead testing results were presented to the Trail Health and Environment Committee on November 20. The results revealed that we have reached the goals set in 2001. This is good news for our community!

When the Trail Community Lead Task force was winding down, it set the following goals for children's blood lead levels in the community:

At least 90% of children should have blood lead levels less than 10 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$).

At least 99% of children should have blood lead levels less than 15 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$.

In September of 2007, following a hot, dry, summer, 132 children in the seven Trail neighbourhoods closest to the smelter, came in to the Kiro Wellness Centre for blood lead testing. This represented 72% of local children aged six months to five years. Results revealed that very close to 90% of children who live in these communities had a blood lead level below 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. There were also no children living in these communities who had a blood lead level above 15 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$.

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Ryan Doyle gives an uncertain look as he sits beside the gigantic 13 lb 14 oz zucchini. Ryan and his family were the winners of the gift card from Safeway for guessing closest to the actual weight. Ryan participated in this past year's Blood Lead Clinic.

This is a great improvement from 1991 when only about 15% of Trail children had blood lead levels below 10µg/dl and about 60% were below 15 µg/dL. Decreased lead emissions from the smelter, combined with a community education and intervention program, are credited with the success that has been reached. Now that the short-term goals set by the Task Force have been reached, the community will be consulted in 2008 about the need to set new goals for children's blood lead levels in Trail.

The results revealed that we have reached the goals set in 2001. This is good news for our community!

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommends individual case management, such as home environmental assessments and lead exposure reduction actions, for children with blood lead levels of 15 µg/dL or higher. Interior Health uses 10 µg/dL as its general trigger level for individual case management and also undertakes preventative assessments and action with children whose blood lead levels are approaching 10 µg/dL.

Why is Blood Lead Testing Important?

The Trail Lead Health Services continues to encourage blood lead testing every year for children living in the Trail area. Lead is present in the emissions and dust from the smelter complex. The lead particles fall to the ground and contaminate yards and roads. This soil and dust gets tracked into our homes on shoes, pets, and clothes, and through windows and doors. Research has shown us that children under 5 years of age are most at risk for elevated blood lead levels. Typical childhood behaviors of

putting dirty toys, fingers, and other objects in their mouths cause children of this age group to be more at risk. In addition, children absorb up to 50% of the lead which enters their bodies (a much higher percentage than adults who only absorb 8-10%). The developing brain of a child before birth and in infancy is most at risk from the effects of lead exposure. A blood test for lead is the best way to detect a current exposure.

How Can I Keep My Child's Blood Lead Levels Low?

Good hygiene is the key. Wash children's hands frequently and always before snacks and meals. Keep nails short and clean. Discourage children from putting non-food items in their mouths.

Encourage your child to eat a well-balanced diet high in calcium and iron. Home grown garden produce should be washed before it is eaten. Feed young children snacks and meals in a high chair.

Keep your floors clean by vacuuming and damp mopping. Leave your shoes at the door. Control dust by wet-wiping windowsills, ledges, and flat surfaces.

Keep bare dirt areas in the yard to a minimum. Sandboxes are great, especially if they are covered when not in use. Wash children's hands after playing outside.

When renovating older homes, take special precautions to avoid exposure to lead-bearing dust and paint chips. Ask about the Work Project Assistance Program. Free safety supplies and information about renovation are available for Greater Trail residents renovating older homes.

Talk to Valerie at 364-6223 if you have questions about lead exposures in Trail.

Are you Renovating your Home?

If you are considering renovating your home, it might be wise to do some research first. If your house was built between 1960 and 1980, the interior or exterior paint may contain small amounts of lead. If it was built before 1960, it is fairly likely that the lead levels will be high. Lead-based paint that is in good condition, does not pose any danger. However, if that paint is disturbed by sanding, scraping, or heating, occupants can be exposed to lead. In addition to lead based paint, homes in Trail likely have lead dust from years of smelter emissions hiding behind old lath and plaster walls or ceiling tiles, and on your roofing material.

Another source of lead exposure in the Trail area is renovation of your yard. When you take up the existing ground covers to change your landscaping, you should take some simple precautions to avoid exposing your family to lead. So before you renovate, excavate, or remove roofing, contact the Work Project Assistance Program (WPAP) at 364-6223 and:

Remember

Your family can be exposed to harmful contaminants when you renovate your home. Check out your options and keep yourself and your family healthy.



New Dirt Hound Vacuum for loan through the Work Project Assistance Program

- Ask about printed information available for those doing home renovations.
- Ask about detailed advice on how to control dust and dispose of waste safely.
- Ask about free safety supplies like respirators, disposable coveralls, gloves, and plastic sheeting barriers.
- Ask about disposal equipment and containers.
- Ask about equipment loans of Dirt Hound and HEPA filter vacuums, and plastic containers for transporting renovation waste (\$20.00 refundable deposit collected for each piece of equipment).

Human Health Risk Assessment Update Project

In the 1990's, the Trail Community Lead Task Force, as well as the BC Cancer Agency and the BC Center for Disease Control, looked at possible health risks related to other metals that are found in the mineral ores processed at Teck Cominco. The Task Force used metal concentrations in soil, dust, water, air and locally-grown food to estimate people's exposures to arsenic and cadmium. This assessment found a small calculated risk of adverse effects due to longterm exposures, but no short-term concerns. The Cancer Agency and CDC looked at rates of diseases in the local population (cancers and kidney disease) and found no measureable increases in rates of disease in this area.

In 2004, the BC Ministry of Environment reviewed the work done in the 1990s and recommended some additional sampling and analysis. This additional sampling and updated risk analysis are currently underway, with results to be available for public presentation in several months time.

Ongoing Community Education Projects

- In 2007 the "Lead and your Family's Health" brochure was updated. The brochure is available through the Trail Health Unit, Dr's clinics, Kootenay Boundary Regional Hospital maternity ward, and is mailed to new parents.
- Annual newsletter mailed to every household in Trail.
- Radio advertisements throughout the spring and summer on topics such as: lead and nutrition, lead and home renovations, blood lead testing, and reducing lead in the home and yard.
- Storybook aimed at preschoolers is available to daycare providers through the Child Care Resource and Referral Program.
- Ongoing presentations to community groups such as Building Beautiful Babies and Child Care Resource and Referral Dropin Play Group.
- Work Project Assistance Program informational CD's available from the Trail Health Unit for homeowners doing renovation, excavation or demotion in Trail.



Interior Health has moved to a new location at the Kiro Wellness Centre at Suite #2 1500 Columbia Avenue in Trail.

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