



NEWS RELEASE

Children's Blood Lead Testing Clinics Confirmed for September

August 17th, 2020

Trail, BC – The annual children's blood lead testing clinics will take place in September. All children aged 6-36 months in the Trail area, including Casino, Oasis, Rivervale, Waneta and Warfield are invited. In Trail, the average blood lead level over the past two years has been under 3ug/dL, the lowest levels seen since testing began. Still, there is no safe blood lead level.

In 2020, the Province of British Columbia lowered the threshold to identify elevated blood lead levels. The term used is "exposure investigation level (EIL)" and for children's blood lead it is set at 5 micrograms / deciliter. Annual testing allows the program to understand our community better as well as identify any children and families needing additional care to lower blood lead levels.

With the province's new, lower EIL, the Medical Health Officer for the Trail Area Health & Environment Committee (THEC) reviewed historical data. "Blood lead levels have decreased in most of Canada as we removed lead from fuel, paint, cans and other sources. In Trail, blood leads have also decreased. Recent trends show that children in Trail have similar blood lead levels to the surrounding areas. Given this, I recommend all children aged 6-36 months living in Trail, Casino, Oasis, Rivervale, Waneta and Warfield participate in the annual blood lead testing clinic. However, parents in any community in Greater Trail may request blood lead testing for their child up to age 60 months."

Voluntary blood lead clinics in Trail have been taking place since 1991. The community developed around one of the largest operating lead / zinc smelters in the world. Living next door to a smelter has created unique challenges in terms of minimizing exposure to lead in house dust and soil. Many improvements to reduce emissions from the smelter and address historical impacts to soils have been made. The Trail Area Health & Environment Program (THEP) helps prevent children's exposure to lead via their programs. In addition to improving local air quality, the program focuses on providing tailored education and supports directly to families. These may include Healthy Home visits focused on easy ways to keep the home dust-free, yard, garden and lead safe renovation support. Healthy Family visits focus on child development, nutrition and prevention of exposure to lead. Meghan Morris, the THEP's public health nurse advises, "Keep indoor dust down and wash your children's hands especially before eating and after playing outdoors."

Meghan adds, “This year the clinics will look different as physical distancing health & safety measures will be put in place. Despite COVID-19, we hope all families in the community will participate. The staff are working hard to ensure a safe environment for testing. Blood lead clinics provide ongoing information on the health of our children as well as to identify where we need to provide enhanced support. This information is critical to the success of the THEP.”

Learn ways to help your family reduce exposure to lead at thep.ca.

Text your public health nurse with additional questions: 250-231-5945.

Clinic dates and times are:

- Monday September 14
- Tuesday September 15
- Monday September 21
- Wednesday September 23
- Monday September 28
- Tuesday September 29

About the Trail Area Health & Environment Program

The Trail Area Health & Environment Program is a comprehensive community program that works to reduce community exposure to lead and other smelter metals in the Trail area by improving air quality, supporting family health and keeping homes, gardens and parks healthy and safe.

The Trail Area Health & Environment Committee (THEC), a subcommittee of the City of Trail, oversees the program. THEC includes collaboration with the local community, Teck, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, and Interior Health. Over the past three decades children’s blood lead levels in Trail have reduced and air quality has improved. For more information visit thep.ca.

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