While overt childhood lead poisoning from environmental sources has been long recognised in Australia, concern over the more subtle effects of chronic low-level exposure to lead has arisen only over the past decade or so. Communities clearly at high risk in NSW are those near lead industries – such as Boolaroo in Newcastle and Broken Hill. In both these communities the Public Health Network has determined the proportion of children with a high blood level, and some of the risk factors. Children in older urban areas face risks from old lead-based paint and soil that has become contaminated from leaded petrol exhausts. The research by the Public Health Network has assessed the extent of risk among these children as well. Work is now addressing interventions to reduce children's blood lead level. In Broken Hill, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and Western NSW Public Health Unit are collaborating to evaluate these efforts. In Sydney, Public Health Units look forward to working with the EPA's recently upgraded Lead Reference Centre to develop interventions and conduct further research to reduce lead poisoning among urban children.

The following list describes the action of the NSW Public Health Network to address lead problems since 1991.

Publications and reports

Title: Community prevalence survey of children's blood lead levels and environmental contamination in inner Sydney
Contact: CS PHU

Title: Mort Bay, Balmain pilot study of blood lead in children
Authors: Smith J, Mira M, Fett M, Alperstein G, Gulson B, Brokenshore T, Cannata S.
Publication: Central Sydney Public Health Unit 1992
Contact: CS PHU

Title: Living near a lead smelter: an environmental health risk assessment in Boolaroo and Argenton, New South Wales
Authors: Galvin J, Stephenson J, Wlodarczyk J, Loughran R, Waller G.
Publication: Aust J Public Health 1993; 17: 373-8
Contact: HUN PHU

Title: The Newcastle lead study: how straight is the critical path for a multisectoral approach towards a public health outcome?
Authors: Galvin J, Stephenson J.
Publication: Conference Proceedings, Public Health Association Conference, Canberra, 1992
Contact: HUN PHU

Title: Tackling childhood lead poisoning: The Newcastle lead study
Authors: Galvin J, Stephenson J, Corbett S.
Contact: HUN PHU

Title: Blood lead levels in 1-4 year old children attending child care centres in the Eastern Sydney Area
Authors: Cowie C, Black D, Perton M, Fraser I.
Publication: NSW Public Health Bulletin (Supplement) 1994; 6(S-1): 9
Contact: ES PHU

Title: Illawarra child blood lead study 1994
Authors: Kreiss I, Calvert G, Gan J, Westley-Wise V, Willison R.
Publication: Illawarra Environmental Health Unit/Illawarra Public Health Unit 1994.
Contact: ILL PHU

Title: Evaluation of possible environmental sources of lead affecting children in Port Kembla, Kemblawarra, Warrawong and Cringila
Authors: Williams C, Calvert GD, Gan J, Kacprzak J, Kreiss I, Westley-Wise V, Willison R.
Publication: Illawarra Environmental Health Unit/Illawarra Public Health Unit, 1995.
Contact: ILL PHU

Title: Risk factors for blood lead levels in preschool children in Broken Hill
Authors: Phillips A, Hall J.
Publication: Western NSW Public Health Unit
Contact: WN PHU

Public health programs and research

Title: 1991 Prevalence study of blood lead levels in Broken Hill (completed)
Contact: WN PHU

Title: 1992 Cross-sectional study of blood lead levels in Broken Hill (completed)
Contact: WN PHU

Title: Survey of blood lead level in children (completed)
Contact: CS PHU

Title: 1993 Broken Hill cross-sectional blood lead survey (completed)
Contact: WN PHU

Title: Case control study of risk factors for elevated lead in Broken Hill (completed)
Contact: WN PHU

Title: Case control study of environmental factors and high blood lead levels in the Port Kembla area (in progress)
Contact: ILL PHU
### Lead exposure at a school

> Continued from page 125

As a consequence an environmental assessment of the child's new school was carried out. Subsequently, other students at the school were offered blood lead testing and public health action was taken to reduce lead exposure within the school grounds. The study highlighted the benefits of notification of elevated blood lead levels to public health authorities, following NHMRC recommendations. Public health action can then be taken to reduce exposures. The study also drew attention to the value of targeting children with developmental disabilities for lead screening, especially those in potentially contaminated environments and those who frequently engage in hand-to-mouth activity.

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<th>Code</th>
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(Compiled by the South West Centre for Public Health on behalf of the Public Health Network)