



TRAIL AREA

Health & Environment Program

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FACT SHEET

FAMILY HEALTH

Family Health Program

I would have no hesitation to live in Trail and I would have no hesitation to live there if I had young children.

– Dr. Nelson Ames, retired Medical Health Officer, Kootenays

What does the Family Health program do?

The Family Health Program works with families in the Trail area to reduce children's exposure to lead. The program offers children's blood lead testing, support for families where children have high or rising blood lead levels, information on how to reduce lead exposure, and referrals to the Home & Garden Program (as needed).

Why is the focus on young children?

- small children are most likely to put dirty hands, food, and toys in their mouths and most lead gets into the body through the mouth
- young children absorb lead up to 5 times more easily than older children or adults
- the early years of life are crucial for brain development, the years when children are also most at risk from the effects of lead exposure

We focus on Trail and Rivervale because our annual testing shows there is still a chance of finding children with blood lead levels of possible concern in these areas near the smelter.



What does this program offer to families?

Blood lead testing and follow-up support to keep blood lead levels down

The program tests the blood lead levels in children aged 6-36 months living in Trail and Rivervale. It is important to find out early if a child has high or rising blood lead levels. Blood lead testing is available at parents' request for children over 36 months or outside Trail & Rivervale. Families new to the area or completing recent home renovations are encouraged to participate.

In cases where a child's blood lead level is high or rising, a public health nurse follows up with an in-home visit to help identify possible sources of lead exposure and make a plan with the parents to reduce or eliminate exposure. This includes advice and information on nutrition, hand washing, damp mopping, vacuuming and damp dusting, ways to keep dirt from being tracked in the house, and checking for lead-based paint. Support may include referral to the Home & Garden program for free soil testing and replacement (if needed), and advice about covering areas of bare soil in the yard. The nurse assists parents until such time as the child's blood lead level has been reduced successfully.

Information on how to reduce children's lead exposure

The program has a wealth of up-to-date information available through the Lead Health Coordinator, Jeannine Stefani at (250) 364-6223, jeannine.stefani@interiorhealth.ca, or drop by the Kiro Wellness Centre, Suite 2 – 1500 Columbia Avenue in Trail. Some information is on the website, www.thep.ca, and more information is being added in 2011.

Getting the information to those who need it

We make an effort to get our information out to all new families and pregnant women. We also offer education sessions to pregnancy outreach programs, family play groups, day cares, and nursery schools.

- **Please contact us if you live in Trail or Rivervale and you're expecting or just had a baby.**
- **Please contact us if you're new to the community and have young children or are expecting.**
- **Please tell your neighbour, friend, daughter, nephew, etc. about how to reach us if they have young children, or if they have questions.**
- **If you're doing home renovations, please contact the Home Renovation Support Program at (250) 368-3256, by e-mail at programs@thec.ca, or drop by the Community Program Office at 1319 Bay Avenue.**



What have we achieved for children's health?

The program has been working with Trail families since 1989. Blood lead levels in Trail pre-school children have dropped significantly, from an average of 13 to around 5 micrograms per decilitre ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) since annual blood lead testing started in 1989. The percentage of children with blood lead levels below the international 'level of concern' of 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ has gone from less than 20% in 1989 to about 90% today. This has held fairly steady for the past several years.

Over the past 20 years, the North American "background" average blood lead for pre-school children has fallen from about 4 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ to less than 2. This background level is a reference to help us set our goals. The Trail Health & Environment Committee (THEC) stays abreast of government guidelines for blood lead levels. THEC is pro-active, setting and achieving bold realistic goals that are acceptable to the community and government. THEC is committed to working with other groups in the Trail area to make this the best place possible to raise a family.

What are the children's health goals?

While current blood lead levels in Trail are such that we would likely never detect health effects in an individual, broader scientific studies continue to show health risks from exposure to low levels of lead. So there is still work to be done.

In 2010, the Trail Health & Environment Committee proposed new, tighter health goals to the public during a community consultation. Residents who replied to the survey showed strong support for these goals.

Children's blood lead goal:

- By 2015, to have an average blood lead level of 4 ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) for children aged 6 to 36 months living in Trail and Rivervale

This would result in about 95% or more of pre-school children having blood lead levels less than the 'level of concern' of 10 ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$). We know it will be a challenge to reach this goal by 2015. Continuing to reduce smelter emissions is the most important factor (for more information, see the Air Quality Fact Sheet).



Family health is a community effort

Interior Health provides testing, education and support to families. Teck and the City of Trail work to improve air quality. The Community Program Office offers home & garden services. Parents can help by getting their children tested and making needed changes to their home and garden environments to reduce lead exposure.

Please know that you, and others like you, help make this program a success!

Goal for participation in blood lead testing:

- At least 75% of children in Trail & Rivervale will have their blood lead levels tested each year, from the age of 6 to 36 months

To reach our blood lead goal, we need to keep testing as many children aged 6 to 36 months as possible. We want to get all Trail area children below the 'level of concern' and, currently, one in ten children test above this level. This could be cut in half if we achieve our goal. (For more details on blood lead guidelines, please see the General FAQ.)



What are 10 Top Tips for Family Health?

Most Trail area families know what they need to do to keep their children safe from lead exposure. Are all of these on your list?

- 1. Make sure your children wash their hands and wash your hands often** - always wash hands before eating and when coming in from outside.
- 2. Keep your home clean with frequent vacuuming, wet-mopping and damp-dusting.** Avoid sweeping.
- 3. Keep floors super clean if you have a baby crawling.** For a younger baby, put a blanket on the floor. Wash toys, soothers, and bottle nipples often, especially when children are teething.
- 4. Keep children and pregnant women away from home renovations.** Contact the Home Renovation Support Program. Clean up well when renovations are finished.
- 5. Leave outside shoes at the door.** Place a dust mat at your door.
- 6. Eat regular healthy, balanced meals with lots of calcium, iron and vitamin C.** Avoid high fat foods or having an empty stomach, as lead is absorbed more easily.
- 7. Wash garden veggies and fruit before eating them.** Peel root veggies and wash leafy greens really well.
- 8. Keep outdoor play areas clean.** Sandboxes need clean sand and should be covered when not in use. Hose driveways and paved areas regularly. Healthy grass is a great play area.
- 9. Brush and wash pets often. Keep them off children's beds.**
- 10. Cover up areas of bare soil in your yard, and keep grass healthy.** Contact the Yard and Garden Soils Program.

The general overall level of exposure has dropped dramatically in this community.

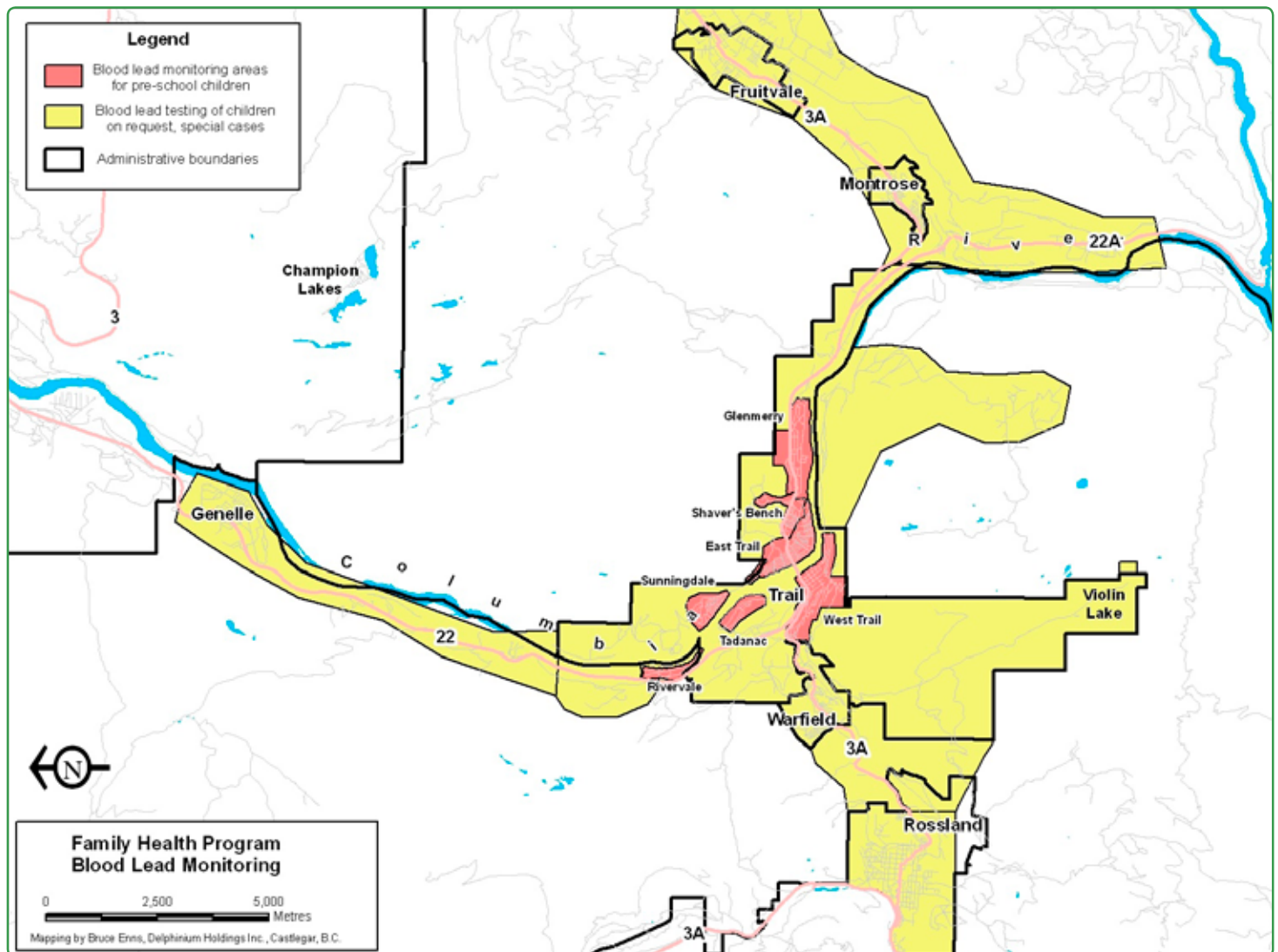
– Dr. Nelson Ames, retired Medical Health Officer, Kootenays



How can I get more information?

For information on the Family Health Program, contact **Jeannine Stefani**, Interior Health, at **(250) 364-6223**. For general information on THE Program, visit the website at <http://thep.ca/>.

Where do program activities take place?



Fact Sheets available:

Family Health

Home & Garden

Air Quality

How THE Program Works

