

Conducting Elevated Blood Lead Level Investigations
June 11, 2026
Webinar Q&A

Q: Elevated Blood Lead Level Investigations can lead to contaminated food products. What kind of considerations might lead you to suspect a food product is contaminated and what food products get the most attention?

A: For food products we will look at any recalls or historically any food products that have had lead in them. We first look at any products that are manufactured outside of the United States. Imported goods like Mexican candies. Are they eating anything from their home country that we might have suspicions about? We have had a lot of issues with cinnamon and other spices because they can be cut with lead in other countries and it doesn't alter the taste substantially. So, we will test cinnamon routinely, as well as red- or yellow-colored spices. We also on rare occasion test breast milk or things contaminated by the environment like chicken eggs. Free-range chickens that could be running around in contaminated soil which can then pass on to their eggs. So, we will occasionally collect those. If the family has an extreme concern, we will test the pantry. We will talk with BEHS if there's anything specific to have on our radar. We do struggle with elevation levels if we don't have a defined guidance from the FDA, and if it's something we don't routinely sample like a dog. Lead level guidance is something we hope is added in the future to raise consumer awareness.

New York City has a repository of things that have been tested. Link provided:

<https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/lead-poisoning-hazardous-consumer-products.page>

Additional information: Even though the CLPPP program rarely encounters elevated water samples, our private drinking water program notes several counties have concerns with elevated well water. Jefferson, Washington, Jasper and Newton counties often find elevated lead levels in water samples when testing private well water.

Jefferson County - An estimated 20% of the population in Jefferson County get their water from a private well rather than a public water system. Nearly 1,800 private wells have been tested so far, but many residents with private wells have not yet had their well tested. Of those tested, approximately 1 out of 12 wells have elevated levels of lead. Data from 2024.

Washington County - An estimated 70% of the population in Washington County get their water from a private well rather than a public water system. Over 4,500 private wells have been tested so far, but many residents with private wells have not yet had their well tested. Of those tested, approximately 1 out of 7 wells have elevated levels of lead. Data from 2024.

Jasper and Newton County also have similar issues with hundreds of wells impacted with lead above the action level.