

# Elevated Levels of Lead in Blood of Children in Kansas Above National Average

Children in Kansas had elevated levels of lead in their blood at a greater rate than almost any other state, according to a massive study published recently.

And more than 80 percent of Missouri children had some level of lead in their blood.

The study, authored by doctors at Boston Children’s Hospital and Quest Diagnostics, was published this week in JAMA Pediatrics, a peer-reviewed journal published by the American Medical Association. It included 1.1 million tests conducted by Quest Diagnostics nationwide between 2018 and 2020.

There is no safe level of lead in a child’s blood. Exposure to the metal can cause brain and nervous system damage, slow a child’s growth and development and lead to learning, behavior, hearing and speech problems.

But the study focused on both detectable blood lead levels, one microgram per deciliter, as well as elevated levels, five micrograms per deciliter.

In Missouri, 4.5 percent of children had elevated levels of lead in their blood. In Kansas, that figure was 2.6 percent of children, both far ahead of the 1.9 percent of the national average.

And the proportion of children with any detectable level of blood lead was higher in both states than the national average of about 50 percent. In Kansas 65 percent of kids had detectable levels of blood lead compared to 82 percent in Missouri.

According to the study, elevated blood levels were once ubiquitous but had fallen over the last 40 years because of policies limiting lead and eliminating it from gasoline, paint, plumbing pipes and consumer products.

But exposure is still possible and disproportionately affects children in families living at or below the poverty line, in older housing or communities with high concentrations of poverty.

“There has been significant progress in reducing lead exposure throughout the country,” the study says. “This study demonstrates, however, that there are still substantial individual- and community-level disparities that have important implications for addressing childhood lead exposure.”

Missouri and Kansas also have some of the highest numbers of lead service lines, the pipes running from water mains into homes and buildings, of any state.

Missouri ranked 6th for the most lead service lines — 4th if calculated per 100,000 residents. Kansas had the third most per capita.

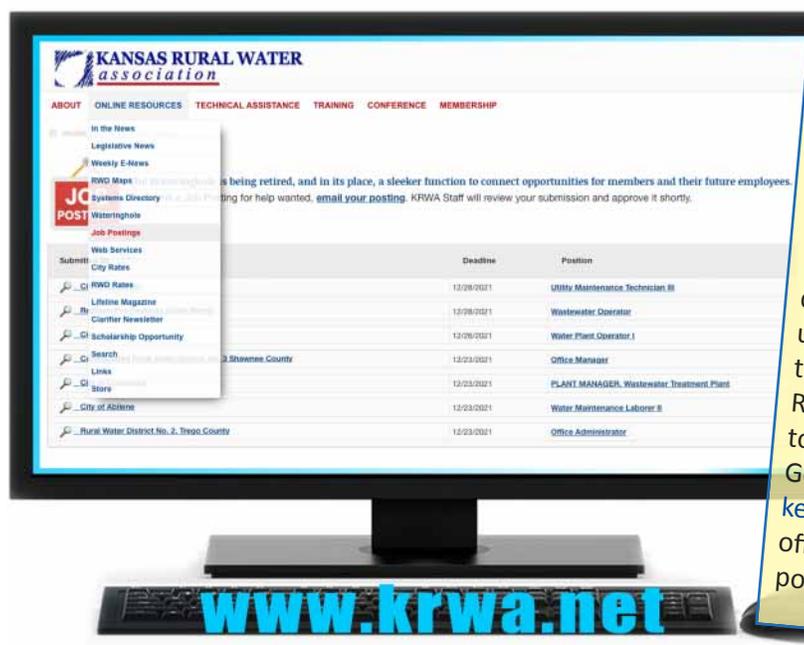
**Exposure to lead can seriously harm a child's health.**

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Slowed growth and development
- Learning and behavior problems
- Hearing and speech problems

**This can cause:**

- Lower IQ
- Decreased ability to pay attention
- Underperformance in school

<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/infographic.htm>



**New Job Postings Link on [www.krwa.net](http://www.krwa.net)**

KRWA is retiring the “Wateringhole” on the KRWA website. This is mainly due to the site only being used for job postings and becoming very dated with past postings. Jen Sharp, with KRWA Web Services, has developed a new and simpler link to allow utilities to advertise their job openings. See the link “Job Postings” under “Online Resources”. Submittals should be emailed to [krwa@krwa.net](mailto:krwa@krwa.net) or sent to Assistant General Manager Ken Kopp at [ken@krwa.net](mailto:ken@krwa.net). KRWA will post the job offering. There is no charge for such postings.

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