

DURHAM COUNTY

Durham offers free lead testing for children. Here's how to sign up.

BY MARY HELEN MOORE | JUNE 13, 2023 11:25 AM



A study published by Duke University researchers in December of 2022 -- but just coming to light -- shows high levels of lead contamination in the soil of three Durham city parks: Walltown Park, East End Park, and East Durham Park.

Audio player interface with a play button, progress bar (00:00 to 02:05), and volume controls (1.0x).

DURHAM

With "disturbing" lead levels being discovered in some Durham city parks, concerned parents might be interested in having their kids tested for lead exposure. Here's what you need to know about getting tested.

FREE LEAD TESTING IN DURHAM

There's no safe level of lead in the blood and scientists have documented even low levels of lead causing children to struggle with learning and behavior.

TOP VIDEOS



The Durham County Health Department offers lead screenings:

- It's free for children under 6.
• It is a blood test, but only requires a finger prick.
• To schedule, contact 919-560-7845.
• Results take three to four weeks.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD HAS LEAD IN THEIR BLOOD?

If a child has lead in their blood, they should be assessed for learning difficulties and developmental problems.

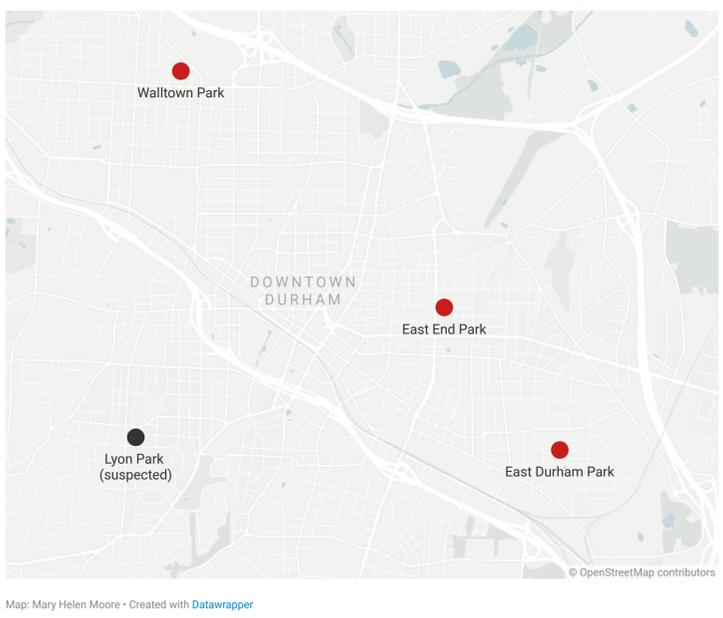
Studies also suggest heart, immune system and hormone issues can be tied to lead poisoning.

The CDC says healthy foods can keep lead out of the body, especially those containing these nutrients:

- Calcium: In milk, yogurt, cheese and leafy green veggies
• Iron: In lean red meats, beans, peanut butter and cereal
• Vitamin C: In oranges, bell peppers and juice

Duke researchers find lead in the soil of 3 Durham city parks

Decades before becoming parks, the sites housed Durham's garbage incinerators.



Map: Mary Helen Moore • Created with Datawrapper

IS LEAD TESTING COVERED BY INSURANCE?

Lead can also be harmful to adults, especially during pregnancy. The CDC says most healthcare providers can test for lead in the blood.

"Many private insurance policies cover the cost of testing for lead in the blood. The cost of blood lead testing for children enrolled in Medicaid is covered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services," the agency reports.

HAVE YOUR TAP WATER TESTED

Most children with lead poisoning get it from lead paint in their homes, according to the CDC. The U.S. banned lead paint in 1978.

Lead pipes were used until 1986, meaning drinking water can also be a concern, the EPA says.

The city of Durham offers free testing to those on city water whose homes were built before 1986.

- Request a free sample kit through Durham One Call at 919-560-1200.

Read more about prevention on the CDC website.

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Mary Helen Moore covers Durham for The News & Observer. She grew up in Eastern North Carolina and attended UNC-Chapel Hill before spending several years working in newspapers in Florida. Outside of work, you might find her biking, reading or fawning over plants.