

Water Poisoning Crisis: Helping Flint's Youngest Children

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No child in the United States should have their well-being threatened by the water they drink. Yet, for thousands of children in Flint, Michigan, that is the stark reality. Save the Children cannot undo what occurred, but we can help address the results and mitigate the consequences.



A registered nurse draws a blood sample from 5-year-old Grayling at his Flint elementary school. The students were tested for lead after the metal was found in Flint's drinking water. AP Photo/Carlos Osorio

The Crisis in Flint and Its Impact on Young Children

Save the Children is committed to helping the most vulnerable victims of the current lead-poisoning crisis – Flint's youngest children.

The youngest children (birth through age 6) and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to adverse reactions from lead poisoning. Lead poisoning can cause long term development delays and loss of IQ, loss of decision-making ability, communication deficits, impulsive, hyperactive behavior, increased aggression and increased need for adult supervision.

Mitigating Lead through Early Learning and Child Care Programs

Early childhood care providers in Flint are the first responders that see and work with young children on a daily basis.

In partnership with the child care/early learning community in Flint, Save the Children is providing early childhood education and nutrition support through a visiting program at up to 52 child care sites. Each participating site will receive a resource basket from that includes a package of 1,000 baby wipes, hand sanitizer, a colorful bag of children's blocks, art materials (crayons, colored pencils, colored paper), five children's books focused on healthy eating and good-hygiene and a first aid kit.

Each participating site will also receive at least three follow-up visits before the end of June during which they will be provided with information and guidance about children's learning activities that are specifically designed to help mitigate lead exposure.

Mitigating Lead through Healthy Nutrients

Lead-Fighting Nutrient Pilot

Save the Children is currently piloting a creative project to get young children to eat healthy, lead-mitigating nutrients. Our "smoothie" project is being piloted with a Flint Montessori program that serves 90 children, many of whom are among the most at-risk in Flint. The project is an easy, fast and fun way to engage children in eating healthy foods, at the same time providing them with nutritious fruits and vegetables that offer the calcium, iron and vitamin C proven to help lessen the absorption of lead in children's bodies. Typical smoothie ingredients include fresh spinach, frozen berries, mangoes,



A preschooler's smile shows evidence of the lead-fighting, spinach-based smoothie he just enjoyed through our pilot project. Photo: Stuart J. Sial/Save the Children

pineapples, apples and orange juice. The pilot will run for ten weeks and will be tested in additional child care centers as funding permits. Every family that participates in the smoothie project will have the opportunity to take home a blender to enable them to make healthy smoothies at home.

Distributions of Safe Water/ Nutritious Food

Save the Children is supporting the distribution of water at three community centers in Flint. Additionally, we are supporting the Eastern Michigan Food Bank by helping to sort donations of food and compile them into food boxes. To date, we have distributed more than 85,000 gallons of water and compiled close to 900 boxes of food.

Why Save the Children?

More than 80 years' experience working to promote the well-being of young children in communities across the U.S. makes Save the Children uniquely qualified to address the current emergency in Flint. Since Hurricane Katrina, we have served more than 1.3 million children through our work on emergencies in the U.S. Our staff is expert at building community collaborations to support children's most critical needs in emergencies, and we are experienced in strengthening existing programs – a key goal in Flint – so our work will be sustainable over the long term.

No one knows when the next crisis will strike. That's why 10 percent of your generous gift goes to helping our emergency team prepare for and provide critical assistance when and where children need us the most.