



# Lead Poisoning



## What is Lead?

Lead is a toxic metal used in a variety of products and materials. Many homes built before 1978 have lead-based paint. When lead is absorbed in the body, it can cause damage to the central nervous system and vital organs like the brain, kidneys, nerves, and blood cells. Because lead exposure often occurs with no obvious symptoms, it frequently goes unrecognized.

Both inside and outside the home, peeling or chipping lead-based paint releases its lead, which then mixes with household dust and soil. Children under the age of 6 years old are at risk because they tend to put their hands or other objects, which may be contaminated with lead dust, into their mouths.

Protecting children from exposure to lead is important to lifelong good health. **No safe blood lead level in children has been identified.** Even low levels of lead in blood have been shown to affect IQ, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement.

*The most important step parents, doctors, and others can take is to prevent lead exposure before it occurs.*

## What can you do to prevent lead poisoning?

It is important to determine the construction year of the house where your child spends a large amount of time (e.g., grandparents or daycare). In housing built before 1978, assume that the paint has lead unless tests show otherwise.

### If your home was built before 1978:

- Regularly wet-mop floors and wet-wipe window components.
- Vacuum carpets and upholstery to remove dust, using a vacuum with a HEPA filter or a “high efficiency” collection bag.
- Take off shoes when entering the house to prevent bringing lead-contaminated soil in from outside.
- Pick up loose paint chips carefully with a paper towel; wipe the surface clean with a wet paper towel.
- Take precautions to avoid creating lead dust when remodeling, renovating, or maintaining your home. Children and pregnant women should not be present during renovation of a home built before 1978.

- Have your home checked for lead hazards by a lead professional, including the soil.

### For your child(ren):

- Wash your child’s hands and toys frequently, to reduce exposure.
- Create barriers between living/play areas and lead sources. Clean and isolate all sources of lead. Close and lock doors to keep children away from chipping or peeling paint on walls. Apply temporary barriers such as contact paper or duct tape, to cover holes in walls or to block children’s access to other sources of lead.
- Prevent children from playing in bare soil; if possible, provide them with sandboxes.
- Avoid eating candies imported from Mexico.
- Remove recalled toys and toy jewelry immediately from children.
- Avoid using containers, cookware, or tableware not shown to be lead free.
- Use cold water from the tap for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula. Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead.
- Avoid using home remedies and cosmetics that contain lead.
- Children under 6 years of age should have their blood lead level tested if they may have been exposed to lead. Ask your health care provider or local health department if your child should have their lead level tested.

### Symptoms of Lead Poisoning:

- Headaches
- Stomach aches
- Nausea
- Tiredness
- Irritability

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