

Lead Poisoning Prevention Fact Sheet



FACTS ABOUT LEAD-BASED PAINT

Lead is a toxic metal that was used for many years in products found in and around our homes. Over the past 30 years, the U.S. has banned lead from products such as gasoline, pipes, and paint. Even though lead is no longer used in home construction, many older homes have lead in paint that can pose a health risk to children living in them. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates that 38 million homes in the U.S. still contain some lead paint on areas such as walls, woodwork, porches, siding, windows, and doors. This lead becomes dangerous as the paint wears or is disturbed by renovations, creating lead dust.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEAD

Lead poisoning is a preventable environmental disease which affects an estimated 250,000 children in the United States. Lead can get into your body, through breathing or swallowing lead dust particles, and by eating chips, dust, or soil containing lead based-paint.

Lead is most harmful to children six-years-old or younger because children often put their hands and other objects in to their mouth which may have lead dust on them. Growing bodies absorb more lead, and **children's brains and nervous systems are more sensitive to the damaging effects of lead.**

Health effects of lead in children can include:

- Behavioral and learning problems (hyperactivity)
- Delayed growth
- Hearing problems
- Headaches
- Damage to the brain and central nervous system

Health effects of lead in adults can include:

- Reproductive problems
- High blood pressure
- Digestive disorders
- Muscle and joint pain
- Memory and concentration problems
- Nerve disorders

SOURCES OF LEAD

Contaminated dust is the major source of lead for most children. While lead paint that is intact is generally not a concern, paint that is peeling or chipping can create a hazard. Lead-based paint was used heavily in homes built before 1960, but was phased out of paint in 1978. **In general, the older the home or structure, the more likely it is to have lead-based paint.** It is most commonly found on windows, trim, doors, railings, columns, porches and exterior walls.

Other sources of lead exposure include:

- **Drinking water** - older homes may have lead plumbing pipes or lead solder. If you think your home plumbing has lead, use only cold water for drinking and cooking and run the water for 30 seconds before drinking it.
- **Occupations** - Some jobs may leave lead dust on clothing such as construction, demolition, painting, working with batteries or in a radiator repair shop. If you work with lead in your job, change your clothes before going home. Wash your hands well before eating, drinking, or smoking.
- **Hobbies** - some hobbies use lead such as making pottery, stained glass, sinkers, bullets, or refinishing furniture. If you have hobbies involving lead, change your clothes before going home. Wash your hands well before eating, drinking, or smoking.
- **Soil** - Lead from paint can peel off the outside of the house and get into the soil. Encourage your children to play in sand or grassy areas and try to keep them from eating dirt. Make sure they wash their hands when they come inside.
- **Pottery** - avoid eating or storing foods in lead crystal or lead-glazed pottery or porcelain.
- **Lead smelters** - release lead into the air.
- **Folk remedies** - some remedies contain lead, such as "greta" and "azarcon," which are used to treat an upset stomach.

For more information on lead visit EPA's website at www.epa.gov/lead or call 1-800-424-LEAD

REDUCING THE RISKS OF LEAD

If you live in a home built before 1978 and the paint is in poor condition, or you have been or are remodeling, you should talk to your physician about having your children tested. A simple blood test is the only way to know if a child has lead poisoning. Blood lead tests are especially important for babies and toddlers since their blood levels tend to increase rapidly from 6 to 12 months and peak at 18 to 24 months of age. Children older than one year should have a blood test every couple of years or every year if the house or apartment contains lead paint or if you use lead in your job or hobby.

[A paint inspection will determine if there is lead content in the paint.](#) A risk assessment will determine if there are any sources of lead exposure which may be hazardous and what actions you need to take. Lead inspections and assessments should be done by qualified individuals who are certified lead-based paint professionals. For a list of certified professionals, visit EPA's website at www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/locate.htm or call the Idaho Indoor Environment Program at 1-800-445-8647.

[Certain renovations can release lead from paint and dust into the air.](#) Take the following precautions before you or a contractor disturb painted surfaces:

- Have the area tested for lead-based paint.
- Temporarily remove your family when the remodeling is being done, especially children and pregnant women. Seal off the area from the rest of the house.
- Do not use a belt-sander, propane torch, heat gun, dry scraper or dry sander. These can produce large amounts of lead dust and fumes.
- Follow other safety measures as outlined in the EPA booklet, "Renovate Right" available by calling 1-800-424-LEAD or through their website at www.epa.gov/lead.

[Other simple steps that can be taken to reduce exposure to lead:](#)

- Keep the areas your children play in as dust-free and clean as possible.
- Ensure that your children have a nutritious diet strong in iron and calcium. This will reduce the amount of lead their body takes in.
- Keep children from chewing on window sills or other painted surfaces.
- Wash children's hands often throughout the day, especially before meals and bedtime.
- Wash bottles, pacifiers, toys, and stuffed animals regularly.
- Clean-up paint chips immediately.
- If you rent, notify your landlord of peeling or chipping paint.
- Clean floors, window frames, window sills, and other surfaces weekly using warm water and a general all-purpose cleaner. **NEVER MIX AMMONIA AND BLEACH AS THEY CAN FORM A DANGEROUS GAS.**
- Clean or remove shoes before entering your home to avoid tracking in lead from soil.
- Bathe pets on a regular basis to reduce the amount of dirt they bring in from the outside.

LEAD DISCLOSURE AND REMODELING LAWS

Federal law requires the following in pre-1978 housing:

- Landlords have to disclose known information on lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards before leases are signed. Leases must include a lead-based paint disclosure form.
- Home sales contracts must include a lead-based paint disclosure form. Buyers have up to 10 days to check for lead hazards.
- Contractors doing renovation, repair, and painting projects in homes, schools, and child care centers have to be certified and trained to follow lead safe work practices.
- Renovators are required to provide occupants with a copy of the EPA booklet, "Renovate Right."