

# HEAVY METALS

## LEAD

### ► What is lead?

- Lead has been taken out of the earth and used in paint, plastics and crystal to make them look nicer, or last longer.

### ► What is lead poisoning?

- Lead poisoning happens when lead gets into your body.
- A blood lead level at or above 10 µg/dL means that someone is lead poisoned.
- ALL CHILDREN IN DETROIT ARE AT RISK OF GETTING LEAD POISONING.

### ► What happens if a child is lead poisoned?

- ◆ slowed growth
- ◆ hearing loss
- ◆ learning problems
- ◆ behavior problems

### ► Where is lead found in and around your home?

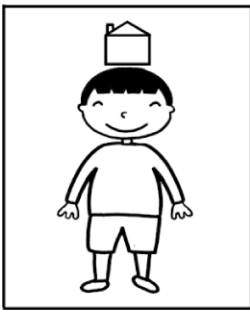
- In houses built before 1978 that have cracking and peeling paint
- Bare soil around old homes and next to freeways
- Toys made outside the United States
- Old painted furniture
- In water coming from old pipes

### ► What should you do if you think you have lead in your home?

- If your child is less than 6 years old, have him or her tested for lead poisoning once a year.
- If you rent, tell the landlord about chipping or peeling paint.
- Run your water for 2 minutes before using.
- Never use hot water from the tap.
- Have your child wash his /her hands often, especially before eating.
- Keep your home dust free by damp mopping with sudsy detergents at least once a week.
- Plant grass to cover bare spots in the yard.
- Wash toys and pacifiers often.
- Don't let children play with toys made in other countries.
- Have your child eat healthy low fat and high calcium meals and snacks.

### ► Did you know?

- Lead poisoning is a very common health problem for young children.
- Lead tastes sweet, which makes a child want to eat more of it.
- Children under the age of 3 are at highest risk, because they crawl or play on the ground.
- Children may get free lead testing at some city health departments.



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## Mercury

- ▶ **What is mercury (also known as quicksilver)?**
  - It is a silvery metal that is used in dental fillings, batteries, thermometers, skin lightening creams, industry, and farming.
- ▶ **What is mercury poisoning?**
  - Poisoning happens when mercury gets into the body by breathing in its fumes, or eating foods, like fish, that come from water containing mercury.
  - A blood level at or above .02 ppm (parts per million), means that someone has mercury poisoning, and should see a doctor right away.
- ▶ **What happens if someone is poisoned by mercury?**
  - coughing ● shortness of breath ● rashes ● vomiting ● mouth sores ● hearing problem
  - blistering ● peeling of hands and feet ● kidney and brain damage
- ▶ **Where is mercury found in and around your home?**
  - In some thermometers
  - Batteries
  - Some children's sneakers
  - Some fish from Michigan's lakes and rivers
  - Fluorescent bulbs
- ▶ **What should you do if mercury is spilled in your home or if you eat fish from Michigan's lakes and rivers?**
  - Keep everyone away from the area where the mercury was spilled
  - Close off the room from the rest of the house
  - Let fresh air in by opening windows
  - Do not let mercury get on skin or clothes
  - For small spills (less than a tablespoon) pick up the mercury with an eye dropper, or scoop it up with a piece of paper or cardboard, place in a water-tight bag, and call your local health department for information on disposal
  - Report all mercury spills to your local county health department, and poison control center
  - Women of childbearing age and children under 15 should not eat more than one meal a month of fish caught in Michigan's lakes and rivers.
- ▶ **Did you know?**
  - Mercury spills can be a health problem for many months or years, because mercury is hard to remove from clothes, furniture, carpeted floors and walls.
  - Mercury is heavier than water, so if you pour it down your drain, it may build up and give off harmful vapors from your sink.