



## Lead awareness and your children

About 1 in 22 children in America have high levels of lead in their blood, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. You may have lead around your building without knowing it because you can't see, taste, or smell lead. You may have lead in the dust, paint, or soil in and around your home, or in your drinking water or food. Because it does not break down naturally, lead can remain a problem until it is removed.

Before we knew how harmful it could be, lead was used in paint, gasoline, water pipes, and many other products. Now that we know the dangers of lead, house paint is almost lead-free, leaded gasoline has been phased out, and household plumbing is no longer made with lead materials.

## How lead affects your child's health

The long-term effects of lead in a child can be severe. They include learning disabilities, decreased growth, hyperactivity, impaired hearing, and even brain damage. If caught early, these effects can be limited by reducing exposure to lead or by medical treatment. If you are pregnant, avoid exposing yourself to lead. Lead can pass through your body to your baby. The good news is that there are simple things you can do to help protect your family.

### 1. Get your child tested.

*Even children who appear healthy may have high levels of lead. You can't tell if a child has lead poisoning unless you have him or her tested.* A blood test takes only ten minutes, and results should be ready within a week.

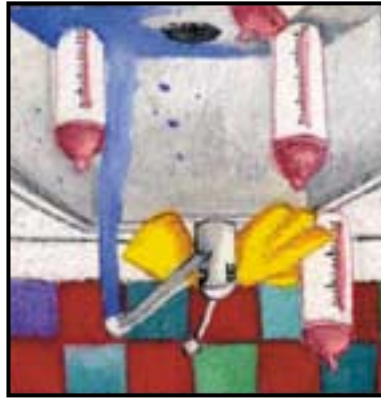
Blood tests are usually recommended for:

- ✓ Children at ages 1 and 2.
- ✓ Children or other family members who have been exposed to high levels of lead.

- ✓ If you reuse plastic bags to store or carry food, keep the printing on the outside of the bag.
  - ✓ Don't store food or liquid in lead crystal glassware or imported or old pottery.
- Most well or city water does not naturally contain lead. Water usually picks up lead *inside your home* from household plumbing that is made with lead materials. Boiling the water will not reduce the amount of lead. Bathing is not a problem because lead does not enter the body through the skin.

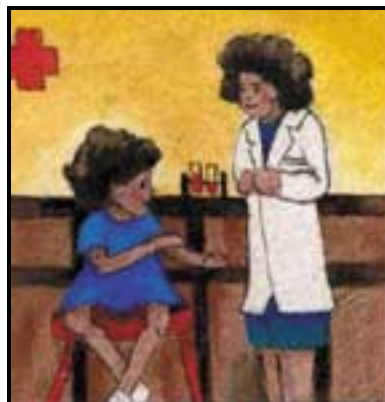
### 6. Get lead out of your drinking water.

- 7. **Eat right.**
- A child who gets enough iron and calcium will absorb less lead. Foods rich in iron include eggs, lean red meat, and beans. Dairy products are high in calcium.



- (1) Use only cold water for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula.
- (2) Run water for 15 to 30 seconds before drinking it, especially if you have not used your water for a few hours.
- (3) Call EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline for more information.

- ✓ If you think your plumbing might have lead in it:
- ✓ Household water will contain more lead if it has sat for a long time in the pipes, is hot, or is naturally acidic.
- ✓ If you work with lead in your job or hobby, change your clothes and shower before you go home.
- ✓ Encourage your children to play in sand or grassy areas instead of dirt which sticks to fingers and toys. Try to keep your children from eating dirt, and make sure they wash their hands when they come inside.



- ✓ Children who should be tested under your state or local screening plan.
- To find out where to have your child tested, call your doctor or local health clinic. They can explain what the test results mean, and if more testing will be needed.

### 2. Keep it clean.

*Ordinary dust and dirt may contain lead.* Children can swallow lead or breathe lead contaminated dust if they play in dust or dirt and then put their fingers or toys in their mouths, or if they eat without washing their hands first.

- ✓ Keep the areas where your children play as dust-free and clean as possible.
- ✓ Wash pacifiers and bottles after they fall on the floor. Keep extras handy.
- ✓ Clean floors, window frames, window sills, and other surfaces weekly. Use a mop, sponge, or paper towel with warm water and a general all-purpose cleaner or a cleaner made specifically for lead. **REMEMBER: NEVER MIX AMMONIA AND BLEACH PRODUCTS TOGETHER SINCE THEY CAN FORM A DANGEROUS GAS.**
- ✓ Thoroughly rinse sponges and mop heads after cleaning dirty and dusty areas.
- ✓ Wash toys and stuffed animals regularly.

### 5. Don't bring lead dust into your home.

- ✓ If you work in construction, demolition or painting, with batteries, or in a radiator repair shop or lead factory, or if your hobby involves lead, you may unknowingly bring lead into your home on your hands or clothes. You may also be tracking in lead from the soil around your home. Soil very close to homes may be contaminated from lead paint on the outside of the building. Soil by roads or highways may be contaminated from years of exhaust fumes from cars and trucks that used leaded gas.
- ✓ If you work with lead in your job or hobby, change your clothes and shower before you go home.
- ✓ Encourage your children to play in sand or grassy areas instead of dirt which sticks to fingers and toys. Try to keep your children from eating dirt, and make sure they wash their hands when they come inside.

- ✓ The proper equipment to clean up thoroughly. Don't try to remove lead paint yourself.
- ✓ All occupants, especially children and pregnant women, should leave the building until all work is finished and a thorough cleanup is done.

- ✓ Make sure your children wash their hands before meals, nap time, and bedtime.

### 3. Reduce the risk from lead paint.

Most homes built before 1960 contain leaded paint. Some homes built as recently as 1978 may also contain lead paint. This paint could be on window frames, walls, the outside of your house, or other surfaces. Tiny pieces of peeling or chipping paint are dangerous if eaten. Lead paint in good condition is not usually a problem except in places where painted surfaces rub against each other and create dust. (For example, when you open a window, the painted surfaces rub against each other.)

- ✓ *Make sure your child does not chew on anything covered with lead paint, such as painted window sills, cribs, or playpens.*
- ✓ Don't burn painted wood. It may contain lead.

### 4. Don't remove lead paint yourself

Families have been poisoned by *scraping or sanding lead paint* because these activities generate large amounts of lead dust. Lead dust from repairs or renovations of older buildings can remain in the building long after the work is completed. Heating paint may release lead into the air.

- ✓ Ask your local or state health department if they will test your home for lead paint. Some will test for free. Home test kits *cannot* detect small amounts of lead under some conditions.
- ✓ Hire a person with special training for correcting lead paint problems to remove lead paint from your home, someone who knows how to do this work safely and has

# Protect Your Children From Lead Poisoning

- 1** Get your child tested for lead poisoning, even if he or she seems healthy.
- 2** Clean floors, window frames, window sills, and other surfaces weekly. Use a mop, sponge, or paper towel with warm water and a general all-purpose cleaner or a cleaner made specifically for lead.
- 3** Reduce the risk of lead paint. Make sure your child is not chewing on anything covered with lead paint.
- 4** Don't try to remove lead paint yourself.
- 5** Don't bring lead dust into your home from work or a hobby.
- 6** Have your water tested. If the cold water hasn't been used for more than a few hours, let it run for 15–30 seconds before drinking it or cooking with it.
- 7** Eat right and don't store food in high-lead pottery.



*Lead poisoning is a serious problem for young children—the younger the child, the greater the risk.*

## For More Information

EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline  
1-800-426-4791

National Lead Information Center  
1-800-424-LEAD

Visit our web site  
<http://www.epa.gov/lead>

United States Environmental Protection Agency • Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics • Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water