

Lead Poisoning Prevention



Where is Lead Found?

- **Paint:** Lead can be found in paint that was made before 1978. This paint can be on any painted surface in your home, like doors, windows, and porches.
- **Dust:** Lead dust in the home comes from lead painted surfaces that are chipping and peeling. Sanding and scraping old paint when repainting or remodeling can also cause a lead dust problem.
- **Soil:** Old paint that has fallen off the outside of your house onto the ground may leave lead in the soil.
- Lead can also be found in ceramic dishes, crystal, food cans from outside the U.S., water pipes, solder and fittings, and some ethnic cosmetics and home remedies.
- Some jobs and hobbies can expose children and adults to lead. Some examples are painting, house remodeling, plumbing, mechanics, bridge work, making jewelry, ceramic/pottery or stained glass work, and going to indoor firing ranges.



Is Your Child At Risk for Lead Poisoning?

If you answer yes to any of these questions you may want to have your child tested, even if your child is older.

- Does your child live in or often visit a building built before 1960?
- Does your child live in or often visit a building built before 1978 that is being or was just repaired or remodeled?
- Does your child live in or often visit a building that has peeling or chipping paint?
- Does your child live with an adult or often visit an adult whose job or hobby exposes them to lead?
- Does your family eat or drink from dishes made outside the U.S.?
- Does your family use home remedies?

How Does a Child Get Lead Poisoned?

- Lead poisoning usually happens when children ingest (eat) dust that has lead in it. Children may also eat chips of lead paint or soil that has lead in it.

What Does Lead Do to the Body?

- No amount of lead in the body is safe. The damage lead can cause is forever! Lead can damage the brain. It can cause growth problems, hearing loss, and learning problems.
- Many children do not show signs of lead poisoning. Some signs of high levels of lead poisoning are the same as other childhood illnesses, like the common cold or teething.
- If a pregnant woman is around lead, she and her unborn child may become lead poisoned. Lead can cause lasting damage to the mother and her baby.



How Can You Reduce The Risk?

- Replace, fix, or manage all lead hazards in a lead safe way.

Steps you can take to prevent children from being lead poisoned:

- Clean up lead dust and paint chips by wet wiping window sills and window wells and wet mopping floors. DO NOT dry sweep or vacuum -- this will spread the lead dust.
- Block places with peeling or chipping paint. Do not use windows that have chipping paint.
- Move your child's bedroom or play area to a room that has no peeling or chipping paint.
- Place washable mats inside and outside entry doors.
- Have people remove their shoes before coming in the home.
- Do not let your child (or pet) play in dirt.
- Wash and dry your child's hands, toys, and pacifiers often. Wash and dry your child's hands before playing, eating, and bedtime.
- Use cold water from the tap for drinking, cooking, and making formula. Let water run for 1-2 minutes before using.
- Give your child healthy meals and snacks to eat. An empty stomach takes in lead faster than a full stomach.

Steps adults can take to help prevent themselves and children from becoming lead poisoned from a job or hobby:

- Don't eat, drink, or smoke in your work/hobby area.
- Wash your hands and face before eating, smoking, or drinking.
- Wear protective clothing (such as disposable gloves, hat, and shoe covers) when you work with lead. Use a NIOSH-approved respirator.
- Shower, wash your hair, and change into clean clothes and shoes before you leave the work area. Leaving dust on your clothes can contaminate your home and car.
- Put your work clothes and shoes in sealed plastic bags.
- Wash work clothes in a different load than the family's laundry.

Does Your Child Need to be Tested for Lead Poisoning?

- Yes, all children, at about ages one and two, must be tested for lead poisoning... it's the law!
- Blood tests will tell how much lead is in your child's blood at the time of the test. If the level is high, your child will need more testing.
- If your child is at risk at other ages, have your child tested at those times too.

Madison County Public Health

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Signs and Symptoms of Lead in the Body

High blood lead level requires a medical diagnosis (5 µg/dL or above)

Symptoms include developmental delays, abdominal pain, neurologic changes, and irritability. At very high levels, it can be fatal.



Can have no symptoms, but people may experience:

Pain areas: in abdomen or joints

Gastrointestinal: constipation, nausea, or vomiting

Developmental: learning disability or slow growth

Whole body: fatigue or loss of appetite

Behavioral: hyperactivity or irritability

Also common: baby colic, headache, insomnia, or memory loss

Lead exposure can cause high blood pressure and brain, kidney, and reproductive health issues in adults. Symptoms of lead poisoning include headaches, stomach cramps, constipation, muscle/joint pain, trouble sleeping, fatigue, irritability, and loss of sex drive. Most adults with lead poisoning don't look or feel sick.



Exposure to lead can seriously harm a child's health, including damage to the brain and nervous system, slowed growth and development, learning and behavior problems, and hearing and speech problems.

Are the effects of lead poisoning in children reversible?

The effects of lead poisoning **aren't reversible**. But you can reduce blood lead levels and prevent further exposure by finding and removing sources of lead from your child's home or environment.

Can children recover from lead exposure?

Adults who have mildly high lead levels often recover without problems. **In children, even mild lead poisoning can have a permanent impact on attention and IQ.** People with high lead levels have a greater risk of long-lasting health problems. They must be followed carefully.

At what age are children in most danger from the effects of lead?

Children **under the age of 6** are at greatest risk for health problems caused by lead exposure. The health effects of lead exposure are more harmful to younger children than older children and adults because their bodies are still developing, and they are growing rapidly.

What are 3 toxic effects of lead?

Lead exposure can have serious consequences for the health of children. At high levels of exposure, lead attacks the brain and central nervous system, causing **coma, convulsions, and even death**. Children who survive severe lead poisoning may be left with intellectual disability and behavioral disorders.

How common is lead poisoning in children?

Lead poisoning is **very common**. 1 in 40 children ages 1-5 years old have blood lead levels that are considered unsafe.

How long does lead stay in the body of a child?

The half-life of lead varies from about a month in blood, 1-1.5 months in soft tissue, and about 25-30 years in bone.

How do you remove lead from a child's body?

Chelation therapy

In this treatment, a medication given by mouth binds with the lead so that it's excreted in urine. Chelation therapy might be recommended for children with a blood level of 45 or greater and adults with high blood levels of lead or symptoms of lead poisoning.

What vitamins remove lead from the body?

For reducing blood lead levels, **vitamin C, vitamin E, thiamine (B1), folate (B9), and iron** have the strongest and most consistent blood lead links. For increasing lead excretion, vitamins B1 and B9 have widely demonstrated effects in animal studies.

What foods get rid of lead?

These foods may help keep lead out of the body. Calcium is in **milk, yogurt, cheese, and green leafy vegetables like spinach**. Iron is in **lean red meats, beans, peanut butter, and cereals**. Vitamin C is in **oranges, green and red peppers, and juice**.

Childhood Lead Poisoning is the most common pediatric public health problem, yet it is entirely preventable. Once a child has been poisoned, the impairment it may cause is irreversible. Lead harms children's nervous systems and is associated with reduced IQ, behavioral problems, and learning disabilities, among other health outcomes. While lead paint in homes built before 1978 continues to be the most common source of lead exposure, there are other sources of lead that can poison a child or adult. No amount of lead is safe for the body.

Recommendations to Reduce Lead in Blood:

1. Talk to your child's pediatrician about their blood lead test result.
2. Look for chipping, peeling, or flaking paint if you live in a home built before 1978, or if your child spends time at someone else's older home.
3. Monitor your child's activities inside and outside of the home to make sure they are not ingesting soil, lead paint chips, or lead dust.
4. Wash your child's hands often, especially before eating.
5. Clean all toys and inside surfaces using wet cleaning methods weekly.
6. Introduce foods rich in calcium, iron, and zinc into your child's diet.
7. Call your local health department. Depending on your child's blood lead test result, the local health department may be required to conduct a lead inspection, or they may be able to do a visual home assessment.

How Lead Affects the Body:



Brain damage

Depression

Headaches

Irritability

Memory loss

Nerve damage

Trouble sleeping

Trouble concentrating

Learning disabilities

Aggressive behavior

Lower IQ



High blood pressure



Muscle or joint pain



Abnormal sperm

Impotence

Loss of sex drive

Infertility

Miscarriage, preterm labor, or stillbirth

Constipation

Kidney damage

Loss of appetite

Stomach cramps

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Have additional questions?

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