

Are You Safe From Lead Poisoning?

How lead affects your child's health

There may be lead in or around your home without you knowing it. You can't see, taste or smell lead. Long-term effects of lead can be very dangerous. They include learning disabilities, behavioral problems, decreased growth, impaired hearing and even brain damage. If caught early, treatment can decrease many of these effects.

Get your child tested

Children who seem healthy may still have high lead levels in their blood. You can't tell how high a person's lead level is without a blood test. Talk to your doctor about the test and the results.

Reduce the risk from lead paint

Older homes may have lead paint in them. Pieces of peeling or chipped paint are dangerous if children eat them. Wash painted window sills regularly.

Do not remove lead paint yourself

Removing lead paint by yourself could cause lead dust. See a professional for help. Children and pregnant women should not be in the house while paint is being removed.

Don't bring lead dust into your home

Work or hobbies involving paint may leave lead on your hands or clothes. Remove clothes with paint on them and wash your hands before returning home. Keep children from playing in the dirt outside of homes that may be contaminated.

Lead and drinking water

- There may be lead in your tap water. If you drink or cook with tap water, it's safest to run it through a filter that will reduce or eliminate lead.
- Water will have more lead if it sits in the pipes or is hot. Run the water for about 2 minutes before using it for the first time each day.
- Avoid using tap water when making baby formula. If you do use tap water, let it run a while first. Only use cold water, never hot.
- Use only cold water for drinking or cooking.

Keep the area clean

- Dirt and dust may have lead in them. Keep play areas clean.
- Children can swallow or breathe in lead.
- Wash pacifiers and bottle if they fall on the floor.
- Wash toys regularly.
- Wash children's hands before meals, nap time and bedtime.

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Eat healthy food regularly

- Children with empty stomachs absorb more lead than children with full stomachs.
- Normal levels of iron protect the body from lead. Eat lean meat, fish, chicken, cereals with extra iron and dried cereals.
- Calcium lowers lead absorption. Milk, yogurt, cheese, spinach and collard greens are good sources of calcium.

FOR MORE INFORMATION please call the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-LEAD, or visit www.epa.gov/lead.