

Lead Poisoning



Lead is everywhere, in the air, dirt, water and in some old paint. Lead is a chemical that is poisonous and is especially dangerous for children under the age of six. Childhood lead poisoning is a serious problem. But the good news is, lead poisoning is preventable.

Lead is found in paint from before 1978. Children can be poisoned because they have such constant hand to mouth activity. They absorb 50% of the lead they take into their bodies, which adversely affects their developing and immature nervous systems. The effects of lead on a child can be severe, including decreased growth, hyperactivity, impaired hearing, behavioral problems and learning disabilities.

Is your family at risk for lead poisoning?

If your family lives in or regularly visits a house built before 1978, then the answer is “yes” because lead based paint was not banned until 1978. Keep in mind daycares, babysitters and relatives homes. Pay special attention to areas of the house where there is friction between surfaces, like windows and doors. Peeling paint and paint chips are a hazard as well as lead dust. Lead dust is released during renovation activities and YOU CAN'T SEE IT. So a house built before 1978 with recent or ongoing remodeling is a risk.

Here's what you can do if you are concerned about lead poisoning:

- Have your child tested for lead exposure. A simple blood test is the only way to tell if a child is lead poisoned.
- Have your home inspected for lead risk.

- Don't remove paint or renovate until you have learned about lead safety procedures.
- Pay attention to peeling paint and paint chips. Pick up paint chips with a damp paper towel and clean up loose paint and dust in window areas using one fourth a cup of automatic dishwashing detergent and one gallon of water.
- Don't use a vacuum to clean up these loose paint chips because it will just spread lead dust into the air. Keep surfaces dust free because lead dust is invisible and can be everywhere.



- Wet mop floors and wet wipe furniture as well with one fourth a cup of automatic dishwashing detergent in one gallon of water.
- Wash your children's hands frequently, especially before eating to prevent lead dust from entering their bodies with food.
- Wash their bottles, teething rings and toys often.
- Provide foods high in calcium, vitamin C and iron. Such foods include yogurt, milk, and green vegetables for calcium, orange and green vegetables for vitamin C and meats, raisins and peanut butter for iron.

Childhood lead poisoning is a serious problem but remember, it is preventable.

Adapted from materials created in 2003 by WMPG radio and Portland Public Health (Maine) as part of Sound Partners for Community Health (A program of the Benton Foundation, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation).
Software by Healthway Software ©2005
This work is licensed under the
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/>

A Healthy Roads Media (www.healthyroadsmedia.org) project

Lead Poisoning (English) – Created 6.05 (Reviewed 4/08)