



*Eliminating
Childhood
Lead Poisoning*

What Every Parent and Guardian Should Know About Lead

Why are all young children between the ages of 1-6 years at risk for lead poisoning?

Children explore their environment by putting their toys, hands, and other objects into their mouths. Through normal play, young children are likely to eat lead that has come from deteriorating paint, paint chips, or dust that has settled on floors and toys.

Young children absorb more of the lead they eat than older children or adults. Children's rapidly developing bodies and brains are more vulnerable to lead's toxic effects than adults. Even at very low levels, lead can limit a child's intellectual and physical development. A lower I.Q., hearing problems, slowed growth, and behavior and learning problems can result.

How can I tell if my child has lead poisoning?

Most children with lead poisoning do not look or act sick.

The only way to diagnose lead poisoning is with a blood test. The blood sample is sent to a lab to find out how much lead it contains.

Beginning at age 6 months until age 7, children should be assessed to determine their risk of being harmed by lead. State and local officials have screening guidelines to determine when a blood test should be given. Parents may need to ask their child's health care provider for the blood test if the guidelines indicate that it is needed.

All children eligible for or enrolled Medicaid, Head Start, All Kids, or WIC are required to have blood lead testing.

Your doctor or health department can provide you with information on testing. Parents should call their health care provider or their local health department for more information. In Chicago, the number is: 312-747-LEAD. Information is also available from the Illinois Department of Public Health: 217-782-5830.

What are the sources of lead poisoning?

Lead-based house paint and lead in soil are the most common sources of childhood lead poisoning. Lead paint was banned for use in houses in 1978. Houses built or painted before 1978 may contain lead, and houses built before 1950 are very likely to contain high levels of lead in the paint.

Leaded paint breaks down over time into dust or chips that can end up on toys, floors, and in yard soil. When children mouth these things, they can become poisoned by the lead in the dust or paint chips. Soil may contain lead from peeling or flaking paint near the outside of old houses, or from leaded gas emissions, especially near busy roads.

Glazed pottery made outside the United States, some children's jewelry and home health remedies may contain lead.

Ways to protect your child from lead poisoning

CHECK YOUR HOME FOR SOURCES OF LEAD INDOORS:

- ✓ If you live in a home built before 1978, check monthly for peeling and chipping paint and dust on window frames/sills, baseboards, floors, doors, porches, ceilings, and walls.
- ✓ Children may chew on crib railings that have lead paint or eat paint chips on walls located near their crib or bed. Look for holes on painted surfaces where paint may be crumbling or deteriorating due to moisture.
- ✓ Make sure that toys, children's jewelry, dinnerware and pottery for cooking do not contain lead. Before you purchase these items, ask the store employee about the lead content.
- ✓ Do not use home remedies such as Azarcon, Greta, and Pay-loo-ah: these often contain harmful amounts of lead.
- ✓ Pay attention to imported foods – some imported candy wrappers and imported food cans contain lead.

CLEAN AND PROTECT YOUR HOME IN A LEAD-SAFE WAY

- ✓ **Wet Clean:** Clean floors, baseboards, window frames/sills, and other surfaces with warm water, and any all-purpose, non-abrasive cleaner (make sure to use wet or damp sponges or rags – otherwise lead dust will just spread into the air)
 - ✓ **Move beds, cribs, or playpens** away from peeling paint
- ✓ **If you discover chipped or peeling paint**, temporarily cover it with duct tape or contact paper and keep children away from the area
- ✓ Do not let children play near surfaces that often rub together or get bumped, such as doors and windows
- ✓ Do not allow lead to be brought home on clothes by persons working in lead-related industries, such as construction, remodeling, etc.
- ✓ Fix moisture or structural problems that initially caused the paint to deteriorate
 - ✓ **Vacuum carpeting, rugs, and upholstery frequently**
- ✓ **Repair and repaint deteriorated lead-paint surfaces** such as walls, radiators, windows, doors, stairways, ceilings, and trim (you should hire a safety-trained lead contractor to do this work, but if you do it yourself, always use lead-safe work practices)
 - ✓ **Flush water pipes in the morning for a minimum of three minutes**
 - ✓ **Do not use hot tap water for making formula**
 - ✓ **Teach children good hand-washing techniques**

USE LEAD SAFE PRACTICES OUTDOORS:

- ✓ **Check monthly for peeling or flaking paint on any exterior surface**, including the house itself, porches, and fences
 - ✓ **Keep all outdoor painted surfaces in good repair**
- ✓ **Make sure crawl spaces under painted porches are enclosed with lattice or fencing to keep children from getting underneath**
- ✓ **Cover any bare soil in yard with dense grass or six-inch layer of woodchips or mulch**
 - ✓ **Check monthly to see that outdoor play space, including neighborhood playground, is free of paint chips and bare soil**

For More Information:

Chicago Department of Public Health 312-747-LEAD
Lead Safe Housing Initiatives at Loyola University's ChildLaw Policy Institute 312-915-6481
www.lead-safe-illinois.org