



*Eliminating
Childhood
Lead Poisoning*



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Photo credit: Steve Brooks
Macon County IL Health Department



WHO WE ARE

Lead Safe Illinois is a campaign to eliminate childhood lead poisoning by raising awareness and advocating for legislation and policy reform to promote lead poisoning prevention.

The campaign works with lead safe community initiatives throughout the state to eliminate childhood lead poisoning.

Visit www.lead-safe-illinois.org for information and resources you can use to help create a lead safe Illinois for our children.

Lead Safe Illinois is convened by the Illinois Lead Safe Housing Task Force, which develops and implements workable strategies to eliminate childhood lead poisoning. The Task Force, chaired and staffed by Loyola University Chicago's ChildLaw Center, advocates for policy reform, promotes public awareness, and fosters collaborations to achieve its mission.



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CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING IN ILLINOIS

Illinois leads the nation in the number of children identified as lead poisoned — more than 16,000 in 2002 alone. Moreover, the Illinois Department of Public Health estimates that more than 81,000 children are being harmed by lead, based on recent research regarding the impact of lead on children's development.

Most children are lead poisoned in their own homes. The Department of Housing and Urban Development has estimated 1.8 million homes in Illinois are contaminated with lead.

While lead poisoning is potentially devastating, it is also entirely preventable.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH LEAD?

Lead is a toxic metal. Deteriorating lead paint on windows, doors, and porches in homes built before 1978 is the main cause.

Most children are lead poisoned by touching lead contaminated dust or paint chips and then putting their hands in their mouths.

Children 0–6 years are at greatest risk for lead poisoning because of the high levels of lead they retain, their hand-to-mouth activities, and the sensitivity of their nervous system. Extensive exposure to lead can also cause permanent health problems for older children, pregnant women, and other adults. In addition, it is thought that pregnant women who are lead poisoned may pass lead on to their babies.

Lead poisoning in children can cause irreversible brain damage, and even at very low levels can lead to:

- Learning disabilities, such as speech and language disorders.
- Behavioral problems, such as aggression and hyperactivity.

Research suggests a link between lead exposure and delinquency and criminal behavior.

PREVENTING EXPOSURE IS THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT LEAD POISONING

Reduce lead hazards in your home

Clean floors, baseboards, window frames/sills, and other surfaces with warm water and any all-purpose, non-abrasive cleaner. Vacuum carpeting, rugs, and upholstery frequently.

Use a wet mop or damp dust cloth when cleaning; otherwise you will just spread the dust into the air and it will resettle. Completely rinse sponges and mop heads after cleaning dirty or dusty areas to avoid spreading lead dust.

Keep your child safe from lead hazards

Cover chipping and peeling paint with duct tape or contact paper. Move beds, cribs, and playpens away from peeling paint. Do not let children play near painted surfaces that often rub together or get bumped, such as doors and windows. Wash often children's toys, bottles, pacifiers, and stuffed animals that may have had lead dust settle on them. Wash children's hands and faces often, especially before eating and sleeping.

Eat healthy

Children with lead in their blood, also known as an Elevated Blood Lead Level (EBLL), may not be getting enough iron, calcium, or vitamin C in their diets. A healthy diet may help to slow the absorption of lead into the body.

Have your child screened for lead

Your child may not appear sick. Beginning at age six months until age seven your child should be assessed to determine risk of lead exposure or be given a blood test.