

Lead in Paint

Lead Paint

Lead paint is the number one cause of lead poisoning in children. In 1978, the Consumer Product Safety Commission banned lead in new house paint. Most homes built before that time contain lead. Also, old painted toys and furniture could be painted with lead paint.

Young children can be exposed to lead by eating, chewing or sucking on lead-painted objects such as windowsills, toys or furniture. Also, over time, painted surfaces crumble into household dust. This dust clings to toys, fingers and other objects that children normally put into their mouths.

Lead paint on the outside of your house can also increase your child's risk of lead poisoning. As the lead paint ages, small flakes and chips fall on the ground near your house. These mix with the soil and contaminate the area around your home. It is very easy for a child to ingest some of this contaminated dirt while playing outside.

Lead poisoning can cause serious health problems, especially for infants, children and pregnant women. Too much lead in the human body can cause damage to the brain, kidneys, nervous system and red blood cells.

Some states recommend that all children be tested for lead at age 1 and age 2. Depending on the result of that test, your health care provider may recommend additional testing.

How can I find out if my home has lead paint?

There are three ways to test for lead paint in your home.

- ***Send paint samples to a certified laboratory.*** Call your local Department of Health for a list of certified labs.
- ***Hire a private testing company to test your home using a x-ray fluorescence analyzer, commonly called an XRF.*** Call the Department of Health for a list of licensed inspectors.
- ***Use a home test kit to test ceramics, old painted toys, or furniture.*** These kits are often available at hardware stores.

Are there any temporary measures I can take to reduce my child's risk of lead poisoning?

Yes.

- At least once a week, wipe down windowsills, wells, tracks, and other surfaces where dust collects with an all purpose cleaning solution.
- Vacuum carpeted areas at least once a week with a HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filter vacuum to remove lead paint chips and flakes.

- Block your child's access to areas that have peeling paint and contaminated dirt with a fence-in play space outside. Use furniture placed in front of peeling paint indoors.
- Wash your child's hands, face, pacifier, and toys frequently to prevent him or her from eating lead dirt/dust.
- Do not allow your child to play in the dirt around old buildings with peeling paint.
- A diet high in calcium and iron will help your child absorb less lead.

Is there another solution to reduce my family's risk of lead poisoning?

Yes. There are three possible ways to solve lead problems.

Repaint. This is not a permanent solution but may reduce lead exposure. Rental properties and childcare facilities are required by law to fix paint safely. A course is available to all property owners and childcare providers to learn how. Private homeowners are encouraged to take the course too.

Replace lead painted objects. Remove them from your home and get new lead-free replacements for objects such as doors, window casings, moldings and trim. Do not burn any of the lead painted items after you have removed them because burning can release toxic lead vapors. Instead, wrap the items in heavy plastic and dispose of them in a landfill. Check with your local Solid Waste District for more information on proper disposal.

Permanently cover surfaces that cannot be replaced. For example, floors and walls can be covered with a permanent covering such as sheetrock, paneling or floor tiles. Wallpaper can be used to cover lead in the short term. Because the lead paint is still present, it is important that the covering be kept in good condition.

When replacement or covering is not possible, remove lead paint. This is the most dangerous way of eliminating lead in your home. Improper lead removal can actually increase the risks of lead poisoning. Because of the hazardous nature of this procedure, it is best to have the work done by a licensed professional.