



Finding Lead in the Home

Common Sources of Lead

Lead is part of our world today. It is found in the air, soil, dust and the paint of some homes or buildings built before 1978. Being exposed to too much lead can cause serious health problems. Lead is never a normal part of your body. The good news is that lead poisoning can be prevented. This fact sheet explains common sources of lead in the home, and how to avoid them.

Lead Dust

Household dust is a common source of lead for young children. The dust can contain lead from deteriorated, interior lead-based paint or tracked-in, contaminated soil. Lead dust can be created during home remodeling or renovation projects, or when lead-based paint is not removed in a lead-safe way. Your house can look clean and still have lead in it. A child can breathe in or eat this dust.

- Keep your home as dust-free as possible. Wet wash window wells, sills and floors with a cleaning solution made up of household detergent. Mix the household detergent according to the directions on the container. Be sure to use two separate buckets - one bucket for the cleaning solution, and one bucket for the clean rinse water. Use separate sets of disposable rags or paper towels - one set for the wash step and one for the rinse step.
- Wash your child's hands with soap and water before eating, naps and bedtime.
- Wash bottles, teething rings and toys with soap and water.
- Do not allow children to play or eat around window areas in older homes.
- Adults working in jobs where lead is used should shower, and change clothes and shoes before coming home. This includes painters, remodelers, or workers in smelters, battery plants, radiator or auto body shops.
- Clothes worn at work should not be washed with other clothes. Clean work clothes separately from other clothing. Run the rinse cycle once before using the washer again.
- Keep windows closed on windy days so that lead-contaminated soil does not get into the house.

Lead-Based Paint

Eating cracking, chipping and peeling lead-based paint is also a lead source for young children. Lead paint was used on the inside and outside of homes built before 1978.

- Be aware that lead-based paint may have been used on cribs, highchairs, windows, woodwork, walls, doors, railings and ceilings.
- Don't let your child eat or chew on anything you think may contain lead-based paint. Look for teeth marks on the woodwork in your home.
- Be sure to wet wash, as described above, the windows often. Loose paint and dust can build up inside and under the window area.
- Do not use your household vacuum to clean up paint chips or leaded dust. The filter in your household vacuum cleaner is not designed to pick up and hold small particles of lead. Using a regular vacuum cleaner will spread lead dust into the air.
- Painting over chipping or peeling lead-based paint does not make it safe! You must first safely remove chipping or peeling lead-based paint before repainting.

Soil

Soil can be contaminated with lead from deteriorated, exterior paint on homes, buildings, or fences. As the result of past use of leaded gasoline, lead can also be found in the soil near major roadways or intersections in urban areas. Neither of these places are safe play areas for a child.

- Don't let your child eat outside on bare soil areas, eat dirt, or play next to the house or the street where bare soil is present.
- Cover bare soil (any soil you can see) with grass, mulch, shrubs, or another kind of durable ground cover.
- Keep washable rugs at all of the entrances to your home. Wash these rugs separately from other items. Run the rinse cycle once before using the washer again.
- Take your shoes off at the door so soil and dust are not tracked into the house.

Food

Plants usually do not absorb lead unless there is a large amount of lead in the soil.

- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating to clean off any lead dust that may have settled on the food. Do not store juices or food in open cans. Store food in glass, stainless steel or sturdy plastic.
- Remove the outer leaves of leafy green vegetables.
- Plant gardens away from the house, garage, fence or other structures covered with chipping paint.

Water

Lead levels in your water are likely to be highest if your home or water system has lead pipes or copper pipes with lead solder.

- Plumbing put in before 1930 may contain lead pipes. Plumbing installed before 1985 may contain lead-based solder in the copper joints in the water supply system. Brass faucets and ball valves may contain lead. Minnesota banned the use of lead-based solder in 1985.
- The only way to know if your water (or other lead source) has lead in it is to have it tested by a certified lab. Call the Minnesota Department of Health for the name of an approved lab in your area.

If you think you may have lead in your water:

- Do not cook, drink or make baby formula with water from the hot water faucet. Hot water dissolves more lead than cold water.
- Always use cold water for cooking or drinking. If the water has not been used for six or more hours, let the cold water run for a couple of minutes, or until there is a temperature change.
- Stay away from the hot water tap for eating and drinking purposes. If you need hot water, heat cold water from the tap or the refrigerator.

Folk Medicine

Many folk remedies contain lead and should not be used. Please talk to your doctor if you are using any of the following folk remedies that may contain lead:

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| • alarcon | • bali gali | • greta | • kandu | • lozeena |
| • alkohol | • bint al zahab | • farouk | • kohl | • pay-loo-ah |
| • azarcon | • cora | • ghasard | • liga | • surma |

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Questions?

Call the Minnesota Department
of Health Lead Program at
651-201-4610 or visit our website at
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/lead