

# LEAD POISONING

## What is lead poisoning?

Lead is a metal that occurs naturally in the earth's crust. Lead used to be in paint and gasoline, but in 1977 federal regulations virtually eliminated lead from paint for general use in the U.S. But homes built before 1977 are likely to still contain lead-based paint. Also, paints from other countries are not held to the same standards as the U.S. In our country, lead can still be found in contaminated soil, household dust, drinking water, lead-glazed pottery and some metal jewelry.



Lead is a very strong poison. When a person swallows a lead object or inhales lead dust, some of the poison can stay in the body and cause serious health problems. An estimated 25% of homes with kids who are 6 years old or younger have significant amounts of lead in contaminated paint, dust, soil, and plumbing. Unfortunately, you can't see, taste, or smell lead.

## Who is at risk?

Lead is especially dangerous for children. Small children can be exposed by eating lead-based paint chips, chewing objects painted with lead-based paint, or swallowing house dust or soil that contains lead. Children 6 years and younger are at particular risk for lead exposure because they still put their hands in their mouths a lot. And they absorb lead more easily than do adults. Children's nervous systems are still developing, so poisons like lead have a much bigger effect. Lead also damages babies before they are born.

## What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of lead poisoning may include:

- Irritability
- Aggressive behavior
- Low appetite and energy
- Difficulty sleeping
- Headaches
- Less sense of smell and feeling
- Loss of previous developmental skills (in young children)
- Anemia (low red blood cells)
- Constipation
- Abdominal pain/cramping (usually the first sign of a high, toxic dose of lead poison)
- Very high levels may cause vomiting, staggering walk, muscle weakness, seizures, or coma



These symptoms may or may not be present, and are similar to many other common illnesses. But in cases where some of these symptoms are present for a long time, no other cause has been found, and there may have been some exposure to lead, then tests for poisoning should be considered.

Lead poisoning most often builds up over time due to repeated exposure to small amounts of lead. In this case, there may not be any obvious symptoms, but the lead can still cause serious health problems.

Possible complications include:

- Reduced IQ or failure at school
- Slowed body growth
- Hearing problems
- Behavior or attention problems
- Kidney damage

*According to recent CDC estimates, 890,000 U.S. children aged 1-5 have elevated blood lead levels, and more than one-fifth of African-American children in housing built before 1946 have elevated blood lead levels.*

### **Is there a test for lead poisoning?**

A blood test is available to measure the amount of lead in your blood and to estimate the amount of your recent exposure to lead. Blood tests are commonly used to screen children for lead poisoning.

### **How is lead poisoning treated?**

The best treatment for mild lead poisoning is to stop the exposure. Removal of the source of lead is critical to reducing blood lead levels. Whether or not to treat the child depends on how much lead is in the child's blood. If it's a small amount, the child may just have to take iron supplements. In severe cases with high lead levels, a child might be hospitalized so that he or she can receive intravenous (IV) medication—chelation therapy—to reduce lead levels in the blood. In chelation therapy, the medicine (chelating agent) binds with the lead so that it's carried out of the body in the child's urine.

### **What can I do to prevent lead poisoning in my child?**

- Do not allow children to chew or mouth painted surfaces that may have been painted with lead-based paint. Keep your child away from any peeling paint which may contain lead.
- Children should not have toys or old furniture which may have lead paint. Throw out old painted toys if you do not know whether the paint contains lead.
- Keep your home as dust free as possible. If you suspect that you might have lead-based paint, wet mop floors, furniture, and window sills to remove dust. Watch out for water damage that can make paint peel.
- If you have a water lead problem, run or flush water that has been standing overnight before drinking or cooking with it.
- If your water has been tested high in lead, consider installing a filtering device or switch to bottled water for drinking and cooking.
- There can be lead in the soil around your house, so it's important to wash your hands and help your child develop good hand-washing habits. Be sure your child washes his or her hands before eating, after playing outside, and at bedtime. Also wash objects children frequently put in their mouths.
- Avoid canned goods from foreign countries until the ban on lead soldered cans goes into effect.
- If imported wine containers have a lead foil wrapper, wipe the rim and neck of the bottle with a towel moistened with lemon juice, vinegar, or wine before using.
- Don't store wine, spirits, or vinegar-based salad dressings in lead crystal decanters for long periods of time, as lead can leach out into the liquid.



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Prepared by Colleen Treep, UF Pharmacy Student, with Mary Keith, PhD,LD/N, Extension Agent, Hillsborough County

*Distributed by Betsy Crisp, M.S., L.D. – Extension Faculty IV – Family & Consumer Sciences.*

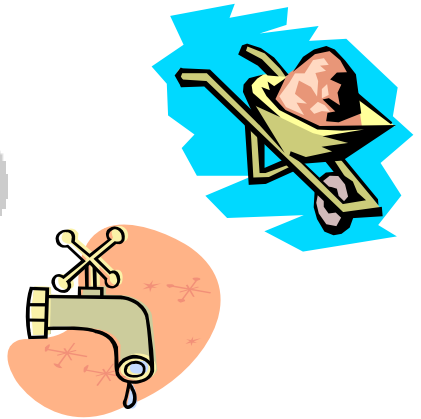
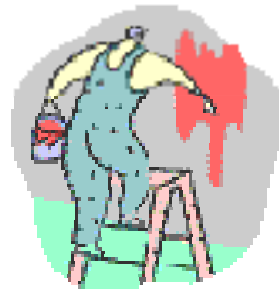
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# Lead Poisoning Quick Reference

## Where Lead is Found:

- ❖ Paint and gasoline made before 1977 in the U.S.
- ❖ Paints from other countries
- ❖ Contaminated soil
- ❖ Household dust
- ❖ Drinking water
- ❖ Lead-glazed pottery
- ❖ Some metal jewelry



## Why Children are at Greater Risk:

- ❖ They put their hands in their mouths a lot
- ❖ They absorb lead more easily than adults
- ❖ Their nervous systems are still developing, so poisons like lead have a much bigger effect.

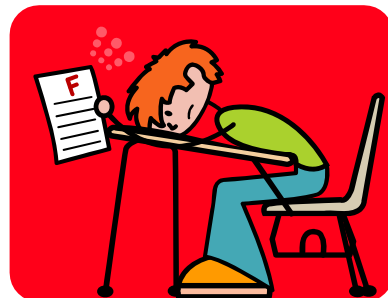
## Symptoms:

- ❖ Irritability
- ❖ Aggressive behavior
- ❖ Low appetite and energy
- ❖ Difficulty sleeping
- ❖ Headaches
- ❖ Less sense of smell and feeling
- ❖ Loss of previous developmental skills (in young children)
- ❖ Anemia (low red blood cells)
- ❖ Constipation
- ❖ Abdominal pain/cramping (usually the first sign of a high, toxic dose of lead poison)
- ❖ Very high levels may cause vomiting, staggering walk, muscle weakness, seizures, or coma



## Long-term Problems

- ❖ Reduced IQ or failure at school
- ❖ Slowed body growth
- ❖ Hearing problems
- ❖ Behavior or attention problems
- ❖ Kidney damage



## Treatment

- ❖ Blood test to measure amount of lead
- ❖ Stop exposure (see Prevention Tips)
- ❖ For a small amount, the child may just have to take iron supplements.
- ❖ For high lead levels, a child might be hospitalized so that he or she can receive medicine to bind the lead so that it's carried out of the body in the child's urine.

# Lead Poisoning Prevention Tips

## How to Keep Your Kids Safe

- Keep your child away from any peeling paint.
- Throw out old painted toys if you do not know whether the paint contains lead.
- Keep your home as dust free as possible.
- There can be lead in the soil around your house, so be sure your child washes his or her hands before eating, after playing outside, and at bedtime.
- Wash objects children frequently put in their mouths.
- Avoid canned goods from foreign since there may be lead in the cans.



## How to Keep Yourself Safe

- Also practice good hand-washing techniques
- If imported wine containers have a lead foil wrapper, wipe the rim and neck of the bottle with a towel moistened with lemon juice, vinegar, or wine before using.
- Don't store wine, spirits, or vinegar-based salad dressings in lead crystal decanters for long periods of time, since lead may seep into the liquid.

## If You Think Your Paint or Water Has Lead

- Wet mop floors, furniture, and window sills to remove dust.
- Watch out for water damage that can make paint peel.
- Run or flush water that has been standing overnight before drinking or cooking with it.
- Consider installing a filtering device or switch to bottled water for drinking and cooking.

## Need Help?

- If you are concerned that your child is being exposed to lead, call your local health department. Our “Lead Lady” is Cynthia Keeton. She can inspect your home and have your child tested. Her phone number is: 307-8015 ext. 7108
- Get advice on safe removal of leaded paint in your home from Housing & Urban Development (HUD) at 800-RID-LEAD or the National Information Center at 800-LEAD-FYI.
- National Lead Information Center (800) 424-5323.
- For severe symptoms (i.e. vomiting or seizures) call 911 immediately.
- For other symptoms that you think may be caused by lead poisoning, call your local poison control center or the National Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222)

## Recently Recalled Toys:

- **Imaginarium Wooden Coloring Cases.** Due to lead paint, Toys "R" Us recalled about 27,000 of these cases, which contain kids' art supplies, including crayons, pastels, colored pencils, and paints.
- **Robbie Ducky Kids Watering Cans.** Due to lead paint, Jo-Ann Fabric and Craft Stores have recalled about 6,000 of these children's watering cans.
- **SpongeBob SquarePants Character Address Books and Journals.** Due to lead paint, Martin Designs Inc. has recalled about 250,000 of these books and journals.
- **Thomas and Friends, Curious George, and other spinning tops and tin pails:** Due to lead paint, Schylling Associates has recalled about 66,000 spinning tops and about 4,700 pails.
- **Children's Divine Inspiration Charm Bracelets.** Buy-Rite Designs has recalled about 7,900 of these charm bracelets due to high lead levels.
- **Children's metal jewelry from TOBY N.Y.C.** This recall includes three jewelry sets for children due to high levels of lead.
- **Magnetic Toy Train Sets.** Due to lead paint, Hampton Direct has recalled about 27,000 of these toy train sets.
- **"Sarge" die-cast toy cars.** Due to lead paint, Mattel has recalled about 253,000 of its "Sarge" die-cast toy cars.
- **Sesame Street, Dora the Explorer, and certain other Fisher-Price toys.** Due to lead paint, Fisher-Price has recalled about 967,000 of certain licensed character toys.
- **Various Barbie accessory toys.** Mattel is recalling about 675,000 Barbie accessory toys due to excessive lead paint.
- **Geo Trax Locomotive toys.** Fisher-Price is recalling about 90,000 of these toy trains due to excessive lead paint.
- **Big Big World 6-in-1 Bongo Band toys.** Fisher-Price is recalling about 8,900 of these toys due to excessive lead paint.

No injuries have been reported with any of these most recent toy recalls. However, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) advises parents and other caregivers to immediately take the recalled toys away from children and contact the manufacturer for a free replacement toy.

Get descriptions & photos of recalls at <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/prerel.html>.

CPSC toll-free Consumer Hotline: 800-638-2772.

You can sign up at this website to get recall info sent directly to your email: <http://recalls.gov/>