

# Facts About Lead-Based Paint

This fact sheet includes:

- Health Effects of Lead
- Having Your Children Tested for Lead Poisoning
- Lead-Based Paint in Homes Built Before 1978
- Reducing Your Risks
- Lead Disclosure Laws
- Precautions When Remodeling
- Some Other Sources of Lead Exposure

## Health Effects of Lead

Lead is most harmful to children six-years-old or younger because children often put their hands and other objects in to their mouth which may have lead dust on them. Growing bodies absorb more lead, and their brains and nervous systems are more sensitive to the damaging effects of lead.

Health effects of lead in children can include behavioral and learning problems (hyperactivity), slowed growth, hearing problems, headaches and damage to the brain and central nervous system.

Adults exposed to lead can suffer from reproductive problems, high blood pressure, digestive disorders, muscle and joint pain, memory and concentration problems, and nerve disorders.

Lead-based paint can be found in buildings in the city, country, apartments or single-family homes, and inside or outside of homes. Lead-based paint was heavily used in homes built before 1960, but was phased out of paint in 1978. In general, the older the home or structure, the more likely it is to have lead-based paint. It is most commonly found on windows, trim, doors, railings, columns, porches and exterior walls.

There are two ways lead can get into your body, through breathing or swallowing lead dust particles, and by eating chips, dust or soil containing lead based-paint.

## Having Your Children Tested for Lead Poisoning

If you live in a home built prior to 1978 and the paint is in poor condition, or you have been or are remodeling, you should talk to your physician about having your children tested. A simple blood test by a physician is the only way to know if a child has lead poisoning. Blood lead tests are especially important for babies and toddlers since their blood levels tend to increase rapidly from 6 to 12 months and peak at 18 to 24 months of age. Children older than one year should have a blood test every couple of years or every year if the house or apartment contains lead paint or if you use lead in your job or hobby.

## Lead-Based Paint in Homes Built Before 1978

A paint inspection will determine if there is lead content in the paint. A risk assessment will determine if there are any sources of lead exposure which may be hazardous and what actions you need to take.

Testing and assessments should be done by qualified individuals who are certified lead-based paint professionals. For a list of certified professionals, visit EPA's website at [www.epa.gov/r10earth/lead.htm](http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/lead.htm), or call the Idaho Indoor Environment Program at 1-800-445-8647.

## Reducing Your Risks

There are simple steps that can be taken to reduce exposure to lead:

- Keep the areas your children play in as dust-free and clean as possible.
- Ensure that your children have a nutritious diet strong in iron and calcium. This will reduce the amount of lead their body takes in.
- Keep children from chewing on window sills or other painted surfaces.
- Wash children's hands often throughout the day, especially before meals and bedtime.
- Wash bottles, pacifiers, toys, and stuffed animals regularly.
- Clean-up paint chips immediately.
- Notify your landlord of peeling or chipping paint.
- Clean floors, window frames, window sills, and other surfaces *weekly* using warm water and a general all-purpose cleaner. NEVER MIX AMMONIA AND BLEACH AS THEY CAN FORM A DANGEROUS GAS.
- Clean or remove shoes before entering your home to avoid tracking in lead from soil.
- Bath pets on a regular basis to reduce the amount of dirt they bring in from the outside.

## Precautions When Remodeling

Certain renovations can release lead from paint and dust into the air. Take the following precautions before you or a contractor disturb painted surfaces:

- Have the area tested for lead-based paint.
- Temporarily remove your family when the remodeling is being done, especially children and pregnant women. Seal off the area from the rest of the house.
- Do not use a belt-sander, propane torch, heat gun, dry scraper or dry sander. These can produce large amounts of lead dust and fumes.
- Follow other safety measures as outlined in the EPA document, "Reducing Lead Hazards When Remodeling Your Home" available by calling 1-800-424-LEAD or through their website at [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead).

## Lead Disclosure Laws

Federal law requires that individuals receive certain information regarding lead before renting, buying, or renovating pre 1978 housing.

- Landlords have to disclose known information on lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards before leases are signed. Leases must include a lead-based paint disclosure form.
- Home sales contracts must include a lead-based paint disclosure form. Buyers have up to 10 days to check for lead hazards.
- Renovators are required to provide occupants with a copy of the EPA booklet, "Protect Your Family From Lead In Your Home".

## Some Other Sources of Lead Exposure

- Drinking water - older homes may have lead plumbing pipes or lead solder. If you think your home plumbing has lead, use only cold water for drinking and cooking and run the water for 30 seconds before drinking it.
- Occupations - Some jobs may leave lead dust on clothing such as construction, demolition, painting, working with batteries or in a radiator repair shop. If you work with lead in your job, change your clothes before going home. Wash your hands well before eating, drinking, or smoking.
- Hobbies - some hobbies use lead such as making pottery, stained glass, sinkers, bullets, or refinishing furniture. If you have hobbies involving lead, change your clothes before going home. Wash your hands well before eating, drinking, or smoking.
- Soil - Lead from paint can peel off the outside of the house and get into the soil. Encourage your children to play in sand or grassy areas and try to keep them from eating dirt. Make sure they wash their hands when they come inside.
- Pottery - avoid eating or storing foods in lead crystal or lead-blazed pottery or porcelain.
- Lead Smelters - release lead into the air.
- Folk Remedies - some remedies contain lead, such as "greta" and "azarcon" which are used to treat an upset stomach.

For more information contact the **Idaho Indoor Environment Program** at:

**Phone:** 800-445-8647

**Email:** [bceh@dhw.idaho.gov](mailto:bceh@dhw.idaho.gov) **Website:** [www.healthy.idaho.gov](http://www.healthy.idaho.gov)

**EPA Region 10 website:** [www.epa.gov/r10earth/lead.htm](http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/lead.htm)