



QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED ABOUT LEAD POISONING

There are many myths about lead poisoning that need to be broken. The problem is not confined to poor families or caused mainly by children eating paint chips. It is usually the result of leaded dust (often invisible) created by chipping, peeling or flaking paint in older homes and rental units. Lead poisoning is most harmful to children under the age of 6 and pregnant women. Lead poisoning is invisible; the only way to know if a child is lead poisoned is to do a blood test. We urge you to get your child tested for lead. It will take a community effort for us to rid ourselves of this entirely preventable environmental hazard. At any time, if you have questions, call the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning at 410-534-6447 or 800-370-LEAD.

What are the effects of lead poisoning? What can it do to my child?

Lead poisoning has been clearly associated with:

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| Attention Deficit Disorder | Learning Disabilities | Convulsions |
| Hyperactivity | Mental Retardation | Reduction of Motor Control/Balance |
| Violent Behavior | | Hearing Loss |

How do I tell if my child is lead-poisoned, what are the symptoms?

Often, symptoms of lead poisoning are difficult to detect until the child is seriously poisoned. However, some poisoned children may have/show:

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|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Headaches | Loss of interest | Clumsiness |
| Irritability | Abdominal Pain/Cramps | Sporadic vomiting |
| Excessive Sleeping | Hyperactivity | Seizures |

Other than children under the age of 6 years, are other groups at risk?

Pregnant women are at risk if exposed to lead hazards. Elevated blood lead levels in pregnant women can lead to an increased risk of miscarriages, stillbirths or low birth weight babies. Older children and adults can also be poisoned.

Where is lead most often found?

The greatest risk of lead poisoning comes from deteriorating lead based paint in older housing. Houses and apartments built before 1978 have a high risk of containing lead paint. The greatest risk is in units built before 1950.

You should look for chipping, peeling or flaking paint on interior and exterior walls, window sills, wells and frames, door frames, ceilings, wooden trim, floors and porches. Even if you see no break in the surface of the paint, lead dust can still be generated by friction in such areas as doorframes and window frames. Lead dust is most often created by opening and closing old windows and doors.

Lead dust is a very fine, sticky dust. Most often, children get this dust on their hands and then ingest it when they put their hands in their mouths. Be aware it only takes an amount of leaded dust equal to three (3) grains of sugar a day to poison a child over time! The following typical toddler behaviors, are dangerous when in an older house with chipping, peeling or flaking paint: thumb sucking, nail biting, putting hands in mouth, putting toys in mouth.

What can I do?

As simple as it sounds, **frequent hand washing** is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of lead poisoning.

1. If you live in a home built before 1978 **have your child tested** for lead poisoning. Remember, children between birth and age six are at the greatest risk.
2. Substantially **cut back or eliminate** foods high in unnecessary fat from your family's diet. If your child is age two or younger, call your doctor before making any major dietary changes. Some examples of high-fat foods:

oils	fried foods	sausage & bacon	scrapple
lard	butter	fatback	potato chips or other high-fat snack foods

3. To decrease lead absorption, **increase** foods high in **calcium, vitamin C, and iron**:

VITAMIN C	CALCIUM	IRON	IRON
oranges	milk	liver	nuts/seeds
grapefruit	yogurt	lean meats	dried beans
orange juice	low fat cottage cheese	liverwurst	peas
	collard/turnip greens	tuna fish(water-packed)	lentils
	spinach	eggs	spinach

4. If your home was built before 1978 and has chipping, peeling or flaking paint, **DO NOT SWEEP UP OR DRY-SCRAPE THE AREA.**

- a. If you own the home, contact the Coalition for a list of contractors certified to address lead paint or available abatement grants, loans and resources or request information on how to address the problem properly.
- b. If you rent, send your landlord a Notice of Defect describing the problem. Send it by Certified Mail. The Coalition will assist you with this if you like.
- c. Keep children out of the area until the problem has been taken care of.
- d. Using a string mop or sponge, wet clean all exposed surfaces with hot water and an all-purpose cleanser. Pay special attention to window wells, window sills, stair treads and wooden trim. Wet cleaning should be followed by HEPA vacuuming, if possible. The Coalition has these special vacuums for loan. Call the Coalition at 410-534-6447 if you have questions about cleaning or for cleaning instructions.

5. Keep children's hands and toys out of their mouths as much as possible.
6. Throw out food that falls to the floor. Washing food off does not get rid of lead dust.
7. Remember to wash hands frequently...children and adults alike.
8. Periodically rinse or wipe down toys. Do not allow your children to play with old painted toys or toys known to contain lead.

If you are planning any repairs or renovation to your home that will disturb paint, call the Coalition at 410-534-6447 for information on how to do the work in a lead safe manner.

FOR INFORMATION ON LEAD POISONING PREVENTION CALL:

COALITION TO END CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING
 2714 HUDSON STREET – BALTIMORE, MD 21224
 PHONE (410) 534-6447 TOLL FREE 800-370-LEAD
 FAX (410) 534-6475 E-MAIL CECLP@LEADSAFE.ORG
 WEBSITE WWW.LEADSAFE.ORG

