



# LEAD

*"Despite progress, lead poisoning remains one of the top childhood environmental health problems today."*

President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children

## Did you know...?

- Many homes built before 1978 have lead-based paint.
- 24 million homes in the United States have peeling or chipping lead-based paint or high levels of lead in dust.
- There is no known safe level of lead exposure for children.

## What is it?

Lead is a toxic metal used in a variety of products and materials. When lead is absorbed into the body, it can cause damage to the central nervous system and vital organs like the brain, kidneys, nerves, and blood cells. Some symptoms of lead poisoning include headaches, stomachaches, nausea, tiredness, and irritability, which may also occur with the flu and some viruses. Lead can also harm children without causing obvious symptoms.

Both inside and outside the home, deteriorated lead-paint releases its lead, which then mixes with household dust and soil. Children can become lead poisoned by putting their hands or other lead contaminated objects into their mouths, by eating paint chips found in homes with peeling or flaking lead-based paint, and from playing in lead contaminated soil.

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U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control



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**In homes built before 1978, treat peeling paint as a lead hazard.**



## What can you do?

### 1. In your home, if it was built before 1978:

- Mop smooth floors (using a damp mop) weekly to control dust.
- Vacuum carpets and upholstery to remove dust, using a vacuum with a HEPA filter or a "high efficiency" collection bag.
- Take off shoes when entering the house.
- Pick up loose paint chips carefully with a paper towel; wipe the surface clean with a wet paper towel.
- Take precautions to avoid creating lead dust when remodeling, renovating, or maintaining your home.
- Have your home checked for lead hazards by a lead professional (including the soil).

### 2. For your child:

- Frequently wash your child's hands and toys to reduce exposure.
- Use cold tap water for drinking and cooking.
- Avoid using home remedies (such as arzacon, greta, or pay-loo-ah) and cosmetics (such as kohl or alkohol) that contain lead. This applies to adults as well.
- Children under 6 years of age should have their blood lead level tested if they may have been exposed to lead. Reasons to seek testing include:
  - They live in or regularly visit a house built before 1950;
  - They live in or regularly visit a house built before 1978 with peeling paint or on-going or recent renovations or remodeling; or
  - They have a sibling or playmate who has or did have lead poisoning.

Ask your health care provider or local health department if your child should be tested for lead!

### For more information...

Visit HUD's website at [www.hud.gov/healthyhomes](http://www.hud.gov/healthyhomes) for more information about addressing health hazards in homes or to learn if HUD has a Healthy Homes program in your community. From this website, you can download a copy of "Help Yourself to A Healthy Home" for more practical steps you can take to make your home a healthy home.

### Other Federal Resources

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control (OHHLHC)  
[www.hud.gov/offices/lead](http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead) or call (202) 755-1785 x. 104

The National Lead Information Center  
1-800-424-LEAD (5323)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
[www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead)

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)  
[www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)

**Dust created by opening and closing windows is a common lead hazard.**



Photo by: January E. Jones, Improving Kids' Environment