

Lead Poisoning

FACT SHEET

Lead enters your body each time you inhale leaded fumes or dust, or swallow something that contains lead.

Your body does not have a use for lead. If you are exposed to a small amount of lead, your body will discharge it. If you are exposed to small amounts of lead over time or one large dose, your body may take in more lead than it can clean out.

Lead poisoning is a disease that occurs when too much lead builds up in the body.

Too much lead can harm both children and adults. No one knows exactly how much lead it takes to cause health problems. Many times there are no symptoms until the health problems are very serious. Usually people who are lead poisoned do not seem to be sick.

Lead poisoning can cause learning, behavior and health problems in young children. Lead can cause high blood pressure and kidney damage in adults.

Who is at risk?

Children under six years of age spending time in homes built before 1950, with chipping or peeling paint, are at greatest risk. Adults who work with lead on the job are also at high risk. This can include painters, remodelers, people that are working with smelters, or galvanizers.

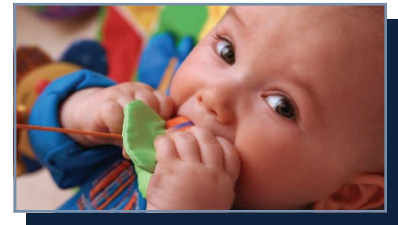
People remodeling their homes may also be at risk, if the paint in the home has lead in it. Family members can also become lead poisoned while the lead-based paint is being removed from the home, if the work is not done properly. The older your home is, the more likely it is to contain lead-based paint. A pregnant or nursing woman's exposure to lead can harm her unborn baby or child.

Which Children Need to be Tested?

A yearly blood lead test is advised for children up to six years of age who:

- live, play, or spend time in older housing (built before 1950) with chipping or peeling paint;
- live, play, or spend time in older housing (built before 1950) with recent or ongoing remodeling;
- have brothers, sisters, housemates or playmates with moderate or high blood lead levels;
- live near a roadway with heavy traffic or a business where lead is used;
- live with an adult who works in a job or has a hobby where lead is used.

Young children are more at risk because it is normal for young children to put things in their mouths. Young children are also very active and like to explore. A child can crawl on the floor and reach windows, walls, railings or doors. All of these areas can be sources of peeling and chipping lead-based paint or leaded dust. Even toys and food that have fallen on the floor can be coated with lead dust.



Eating lead paint chips and lead dust is a very common cause of lead poisoning in young children.

Children bodies absorb the lead more easily. A child's quickly growing body can be harmed by even small amounts of lead.



What can I Do to Prevent Lead Poisoning?

Don't forget that lead may be a health hazard on the job. People working as painters, remodelers, auto repair workers, galvanizers, plumbers and battery factory workers can be exposed to lead on the job. Follow these safety rules to help protect you and your family.

- ◆ Wear protective equipment and clothing on the job.
- ◆ Change your clothes, take a shower and wash your hair before leaving the job.
- ◆ Do not shake out these work clothes and do not wash them with other clothing. Clean washable work clothing separately from other clothes. Run the rinse cycle once before using the washer again.
- ◆ Do not eat, drink or smoke in an area where lead is used.

The best way to prevent lead poisoning among young children is to remove the source of lead. If you cannot remove peeling or chipping lead-based paint right away, block the area with a heavy chair so a child cannot get to it. You can also shut the door to a room, or move a crib or bed away from the wall. Remove the lead source promptly and safely.

Protect your child from lead dust by wet washing the floors and wiping down your window sills, wood-work, chairs and tables often. Be sure to wash your child's hands and face with soap and water before eating and before bedtime/naptime. Wash toys in soap and water often.

Is My Child's Diet Important in Limiting Lead Poisoning?

Yes, a well-balanced diet is very important. Meals high in fats and oils are not good because they can help the body absorb lead. Eating foods that are rich in calcium and iron allow the body to absorb less lead. Eating foods with Vitamin C will help increase the amount of iron in the blood. Eating a variety of foods as part of a well-balanced diet helps a child grow up healthy and strong.

Healthy Foods to Fight Lead

Foods High in Calcium	Foods High in Iron	Foods High in Vitamin C
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Milk• Yogurt• Low-fat cheese• Tofu• Low-fat cottage cheese• Evaporated milk• Foods made with milk; including soups, custards, and puddings• Powdered milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lean red meat• Low-fat pork• Cooked dried beans and peas• Raisins• Iron fortified cereal• Iron fortified infant formula• Breast milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oranges/Orange juice• Grapefruit/Grapefruit juice• Dark green, leafy vegetables• Potatoes cooked in the skin• Broccoli• Cabbage• Strawberries

 **Southwest Nebraska
Public Health Department**

308-345-4223

www.swhealth.ne.gov

The Goal of

Eliminating

blood levels > 5.2 ug/dl

