

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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Lead Poisoning In Children

Why do I need to know about lead poisoning?

Lead poisoning is a problem in children under six years of age in the United States that can be prevented. The body does not need lead to function. A child's body absorbs lead faster than an adult's. Blood lead levels of 10 ug/dl or higher can cause health, growth and learning problems. Learning problems may be the only indication of lead poisoning before serious symptoms occur. Levels of 45 ug/dl or above can cause severe brain damage and even death. However, by the time the symptoms appear, the damage may have already occurred.

Is my child at risk for lead poisoning?

Does your child:

- Live in or often visit a house built or painted before 1978 with peeling or chipping paint or wood to wood friction surfaces (such as opening and closing windows)? This could include a day care center, preschool, the home of a babysitter or a relative, etc.?
- Live in, or often visit, a house built before 1978 with recent, ongoing, or planned renovation or remodeling?
- Have a brother or sister, housemate, or playmate who has a blood lead of 10 ug/dl or greater?
- Live with an adult whose job or hobby involves exposure to lead such as auto repairs or making stained glass items?
- Live near an active lead smelter, battery recycling plant, or other industry that may release lead into the environment?
- Eat non-food items such as dirt or paint chips?
- Eat foods prepared with spices or food additives, such as lozeena, greta, or azarcon, which are obtained from a foreign source?

Where is lead found?

Some major sources of lead are:

- Lead-based paint - often found in homes painted prior to 1978, or on some furniture and toys.
- Lead in soil, especially around peeling exterior paint, high traffic areas, factories with smokestacks and areas where there is sandblasting.
- Newspaper print (some).
- Leaded crystal, lead-based glaze, and paint used on pottery.
- Imported foods in lead soldered cans.
- Some imported folk medicines, spices, food additives, or cosmetics.
- Clothing parents wear home from work, such as in smelting and battery plants, or automotive repairs that create lead dust or debris.
- Dust or lead particles from parents who have hobbies such as making stained glass, casting bullets, using firing ranges, furniture refinishing, or making fishing sinkers.
- Drinking water that has been exposed to lead from the environment or from lead pipes or lead solder in pipes.
- Dust from inexpensive vinyl mini blinds and wood to wood friction surfaces (such as opening and closing windows).

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How does lead enter the body?

The most common ways children get lead into their bodies are:

- Lead dust from hands and fingers into mouths.
- Eating leaded paint chips, dust, soil, ash from imported tobacco products, or food items containing lead.
- Chewing on surfaces covered with lead-based paint such as windowsills, cribs, and furniture.
- Breathing in lead dust.

How would I find out if my child has lead in his body?

A blood test is available. Ask your child's health care provider.

How do I protect my child from lead?

- Look for sources of lead in the places your child lives and plays, and other often visited areas.
- Keep your child away from these sources or remove them.
- Keep your child away from peeling paint, and from sucking or chewing painted objects such as window sills, painted toys.
- Feed your child a well-balanced diet high in calcium, iron, zinc, and Vitamin C, and limited in fat.
- Make sure your child's hands are washed frequently, especially before eating, after outside play, and at bedtime.
- Test your water supply for lead content if you are concerned about lead in the water. Meanwhile, run the cold water until it gets as cold as possible. Do not use water from the hot water tap for cooking or drinking.
- Test vinyl mini blinds for lead or lead dust and dispose of them if they contain lead.

For more information on Lead Poisoning in Children, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.

For additional copies, visit our website at www.oakgov.com/health.