

## What is lead?

Lead is a naturally occurring element found in the earth's crust. Lead can be found in all parts of the environment - air, soil, water, and even inside our homes. While it has some benefits, lead can be toxic to humans and animals.

## Where can lead be found in my home?

- Lead-based paint - often found in homes and furniture painted prior to 1978.
- Soil, especially around peeling exterior paint, high traffic areas, factories with smokestacks and incinerators, and areas where there is sandblasting.
- Drinking water exposed to lead from the environment or from lead pipes, lead solder in pipes, and/or faucets containing lead.
- Children's toys (lead paint was banned in the U.S. in 1978, but it may still be found on older or imported toys).
- 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 worn during activities that create lead dust/particles, including working in smelting and battery plants, doing automotive repairs, making stained glass, casting bullets, using firing ranges, furniture refinishing, or making fishing sinkers.
- Dust from some imported vinyl mini blinds and painted friction surfaces (such as opening and closing windows and doors) painted prior to 1978.

## What are the health concerns from lead exposure?

Children under the age of six years and pregnant women are especially vulnerable to the effects from lead exposure.

### In children:

- Hyperactivity
- Learning & behavior problems
- Hearing loss
- Brain damage
- Kidney problems
- Vomiting
- Headaches
- Appetite loss

### In adults and pregnant women:

- High blood pressure
- Digestive problems
- Nerve disorders
- Reduced fertility
- Low birth weight and size
- Muscle & joint pain
- Memory loss
- Problems with concentration

## How are people tested for lead exposure?

A simple blood test can detect lead poisoning. A small blood sample is taken using a finger prick or from a vein. Lead levels in blood are measured in micrograms per deciliter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ).

While there is no safe blood lead level, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends intervention at 5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  or higher. All children under the age of 6 should be tested at least once, but Medicaid requires that children be lead tested at 1 and 2 years of age.



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**How do I know if there is lead in my home?**

Many home improvement stores sell test kits to determine if lead is present in paint, solid materials, dust, and water. You can also hire a certified Lead Inspector to assess your home; a list of certified Lead Inspectors in Michigan is available at: <https://www.michigan.gov>.

**What can I do to reduce lead exposure in my home?**

- Keep children away from peeling paint, and prevent them from sucking or chewing painted objects such as windowsills and painted toys.
- Regularly wash children’s hands and toys. Hands and toys can become contaminated from household dust or exterior soil.
- Regularly wet-mop floors and wet-wipe window areas (sills, frames, wells, etc.) every 2-3 weeks.
- Take off shoes when entering the house to prevent bringing in lead-contaminated soil.
- Prevent children from playing in bare soil. Plant grass on areas of bare soil or cover the soil with grass seed, mulch, or wood chips.
- Children and pregnant women should not be present in housing built before 1978 that is undergoing renovations. They should not participate in activities that disturb old paint or in cleaning up paint debris after work is completed.

*If your water test indicates that your tap water has lead levels above the EPA’s action level of 15ppb, there are several things you can do to reduce the risk of lead exposure in your drinking water:*

- Replace faucets. Faucets marked with “NSF 61/9” and/or “California Proposition 65” meet stricter limits than “lead-free.”
- Flush your cold-water pipes by running the water for approximately five minutes. The longer water sits in pipes, the more lead it may contain. After the flushing process, you can fill containers for later use.
- Use water only from the cold-water tap for drinking, cooking, and especially for making baby formula. Hot water is likely to contain higher levels of lead.
- You may choose to install a water filter that is “NSF certified” for lead removal. If a water filter is installed, replace filters as recommended by the manufacturer. Visit <http://nsf.org> for more information.
- Use bottled water for drinking and cooking that meets federal and state drinking water standards.
- Clean aerators. Aerators are small attachments at the tops of faucets which regulate flow of water. They can accumulate pieces of lead in their screens. Remove and sanitize monthly.

***For more information, contact Nurse on Call at 1-800-848-5533 or visit oakgov.com/health***