

How To Protect Your Child From Lead Poisoning

Children are often exposed to lead at home and other locations they regularly visit. Many children develop elevated blood lead levels that can cause learning difficulties, behavioral problems, lower academic achievement. Blood lead testing is now recommended for all children less than six years old, particularly if they live in or visit older homes. The following are measures parents can take to protect children from exposure to lead in the home.

The first step is to identify potential sources of lead exposure in and around the home. Lead-based paint used on many homes before 1978 is the primary source of lead exposure for most children. Children can be exposed to lead by either direct contact with deteriorating paint or by exposure to soil or house dust contaminated by deteriorating paint. Children may also be exposed to lead from home remodeling, parents' work or hobbies, dust and fumes from the burning of painted boards, imported canned goods and medicines, imported vinyl miniblinds and car batteries or other lead-containing objects left around children's play areas.

The local health department can provide additional information on possible sources of lead exposure and advice on limiting exposure to children. If your child is found to have a blood lead elevation, the local health department is required to conduct an investigation including a home inspection to locate potential sources the lead exposure.

Here are some ways to temporarily protect your child from lead exposure:

- Cleanup peeling or flaking paint on interior surfaces. Masking or duct tape can be used to lift loose paint off of small areas. For larger areas, spread plastic on the floor to catch paint flakes and wash deteriorating paint using an all purpose detergent or a lead-specific cleaning agent to remove lead-contaminated dust and paint flakes. Do not scrape paint because lead-contaminated dust will be generated.
- Cover deteriorated walls, ceilings and wood trim with duct tape, contact paper, cloth, canvas or similar material to prevent paint chips from falling to the floor. Check the covering periodically to ensure that it remains intact.
- Wet mop or wash porches, decks, interior floors, window sills and other horizontal surfaces at least twice a month with an all purpose detergent or a lead-specific cleaning agent to remove lead-contaminated dust and paint flakes. Wet mopping should be used since sweeping or vacuuming with an ordinary vacuum cleaner will spread lead-contaminated dust around the house. Frequently wash or replace mops and wash cloths to prevent the spread of lead-contaminated dust.
- Place large pieces of furniture in front of windows or other areas where children may chew on woodwork or be exposed to deteriorated paint. Move cribs and beds away from unsafe walls.
- Frequently wash children's hands and toys to prevent lead-contaminated dust from reaching their mouths. Keep baby bottles and pacifiers clean.

- . Do not place toys beneath windows or near painted surfaces subject to frequent friction or impact.
- . Provide outdoor play areas away from the house to keep children from coming near peeling paint or soil that may be contaminated with paint chips near the house foundation.
- . Watch children carefully to prevent them from eating dirt or paint chips or chewing on woodwork.
- . Cover dirt walkways and place door mats at entrances to prevent tracking contaminated into the house.
- . Parents with work or hobbies involving exposure to lead should restrict children from areas where lead is present. Work clothes should be laundered separately from other family laundry.
- . Air conditioning and heating unit filters should be changed regularly by carefully removing dirty filters and placing them in a plastic bag before putting in new filters.

Sticky Tape Technique for Removing Loose Paint on Impact Surfaces

1. Place a small piece of plastic or paper beneath the area with loose paint.
2. Press a piece of wide sticky tape firmly over the area of loose paint.
3. Carefully remove the tape taking small chips of paint with it.
4. Place the tape in a plastic bag.
5. Carefully fold the piece of plastic or paper that was placed beneath the area and place that in the plastic bag.
6. Seal the bag and clean the area.

Cleaning Method for Dust

Always cleanup dust and paint chips with wet mops or rags soaked in a detergent solution or a lead-specific cleaning agent. Many multipurpose household cleaners are effective in cleanup of lead-contaminated dust. Wear protective gloves to avoid skin irritation when cleaning.

Use two buckets -- one for wash water and one for rinse water. Always wring dirty water into the wash water bucket. To prevent recontamination of cleaned surfaces, wash mops and rags thoroughly after each use. If this is not possible, or if the mops and rags have been used several times, place them in plastic bags and dispose of them. Tenants should promptly notify the property owner of any needed repairs.