

Preventing Lead Poisoning: Tips for Families

Your child could be exposed to lead through:

- your home or a friend's home
- work or hobbies of people around your child
- home remedies or medicines
- candy, jewelry, toys or household items

Look inside for more information on how to keep your children safe from lead.

What is lead?

Lead is a metal found in the earth's soil. Lead has no purpose in the body.

What causes lead poisoning?

Lead poisoning is caused by swallowing or breathing in lead or lead dust. Most often, there are no symptoms of lead poisoning. Lead poisoning is entirely preventable. The key is stopping children from coming into contact with lead.

Why is blood lead level testing important?

Have your child tested for lead. A simple blood test can be performed by your healthcare provider or local health department. If the level of lead is allowed to build up in the body over time, very serious health problems can occur. Children and pregnant women are the most at risk. Even low levels of lead can cause:

- learning and behavior problems
- lower IQ scores
- growth and hearing problems

A child's growing body takes in more lead than an adult's. A child's brain and nervous system is more sensitive to the damaging effects of lead. And because young children put a lot of things in their mouth, their chance of taking in lead dust is higher.

Blood Lead Testing

Most of the time there are no signs of lead poisoning.

The only way to know if your child or family has come in contact with lead is with a blood test.

When to Test

Children should have the blood lead test at 12 Months (age 1) and 24 months (age 2) - or, if never tested, as soon as possible up to age 6. This can be done with a finger stick (a capillary blood test) or by drawing blood from the vein in the arm (a venous blood test).

Where to get tested

Ask your Primary Care Provider (PCP) about this blood lead test. Usually this is done at the time of the well-child check-up but can be done at any other time if needed. A child may also be tested at health fairs, schools or WIC offices. This test is part of your benefits and is at no cost to you.

What about the results?

Please ask your PCP to tell you what the number of the result is. An "elevated" result is anything 10 or higher.

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Preventing Lead Poisoning Around the Home

Watch out for lead in your home.

Most lead comes from paint in older homes. When old paint cracks and peels, it makes dangerous dust. The dust is so small you cannot see it. You can breathe in lead dust and not even know it.



Lead could be a danger in your home, or in any home where your child spends a lot of time.

How can remodeling be dangerous?

Any house or apartment built before 1978 may have surfaces painted with lead-based paint. This paint can be found on the outside or inside of a home.

Pregnant women should not be in the house during cleaning, painting, or remodeling a room with lead paint.

Where else can lead be found at home?

- Water: Lead can get into tap water if the plumbing is made with lead.
- Soil: Lead may be in the soil around some homes.
- Hobbies using items that have lead such as fishing weights, bullets, artist's paint, antiques, and stained glass.
- Home or folk remedies such as Alkohl, Azarcon, Bali goli, hazard, Greta, Pay-loo-ah.
- Pottery, crystal and ceramic dishes.
- Plastic window blinds made outside the U.S.
- Imported food and candy.
- Cosmetics and hair dyes.
- Jewelry.

Here's what you can do:

If your home was built before 1978, have your home tested. Never sand blast paint. Use lead-safe work practices.

Once a week, use detergent to wet mop floors, window sills, furniture or other surfaces that may contain lead dust. **Do NOT** vacuum or sweep hard surfaces because this will spread the dust.

Keep play areas clean. Wash bottles, pacifiers, stuffed animals and toys often.

Use only cold water from the cold water tap for cooking or for making baby formula. Run water until temperature changes (about 1 minute).

Cook, store, and serve food and drinks in clean plastic or glass containers. Some imported pottery, china, crystal and handmade ceramics have lead.

Have children clean their faces and hands before eating, after playing and before bed.

Be sure that your children eat a healthy, nutritious diet. Iron, vitamin C and calcium help protect against the effects of lead. Children should eat 4-6 small meals a day because empty stomachs absorb more lead than full ones.

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Lead Poisoning: Jobs and Hobbies



Work and hobbies can cause lead exposure for adults and children.

Children can be exposed to lead and can become lead poisoned when you bring dust contaminated with lead home on your clothing, bring scrap and waste materials home, and participate in hobbies that involve using lead at home.

People working in occupations and hobbies that involve lead should take precautions so they do not become lead poisoned.

Occupations that may involve lead exposure include:

- Aircraft and Ship Manufacturing Workers
- Auto Body Workers
- Battery Manufacturing/Recycling Workers
- Bridge Workers
- Construction Workers
- Lead Refiners
- Mechanics
- Remodelers
- Smelters
- Painters
- Plumbers
- Renovators

Hobbies that may involve lead exposure include:

- Artistic Painting
- Ceramics/Pottery Making
- Home Renovations
- Indoor Firing Ranges
- Jewelry Making
- Making fishing sinkers or ammunition
- Stained Glass Making

Here's what you can do:

Don't eat, drink or smoke in your work/hobby area.

Wash your hands and face before eating, smoking or drinking.

Wear protective clothing (such as disposable gloves, hat, shoe covers, and protective clothes) whenever you work with lead. Use a NIOSH-approved respirator.

Shower, wash your hair, and change into clean clothes, including shoes, before leaving the work area. Leaving dust on your clothes can contaminate your home and car.

Put your work clothes and shoes in sealed plastic bags.

Wash work clothes separately from the family's laundry. Use high phosphate detergent.

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Lead Poisoning: Home Remedies and Medicines

Be Careful with Candy!

In April of 2004, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warned parents that some candies and spicy powders may have high levels of lead. Young children and pregnant women should not eat these candies because of lead.

Having lead in the body can cause a child to have long-term problems with learning, growth and behavior. A pregnant woman can pass lead to her unborn baby.

You can't tell if candy or spicy powder has lead by looking at the package. Also, the amount of lead can be different for each piece of candy. So while one spicy snack bought today may have little or no lead, the next one you buy may have a high level of lead.

FDA tests showed that candies with a lot of chili powder seemed to have more lead than ones that are mostly sugar. Some types of candies with lead are:

- Powder mixes of salt, chili, and lemon flavor
- Lollipops that have chili in or on them

Some fruit pulp candies can also have lead. One kind is Tamarind candy sold in small clay pots with a shiny glaze. Another kind of fruit pulp candy with chili called "Chaca Chaca" was taken off the shelf in March 2004 because it had a lot of lead in it.

Home remedies and medicines are used to help cure sick people. However, some remedies and medicines contain lead and may make people very sick and cause lead poisoning.

These home remedies are known to contain lead and are very dangerous! **Do not use these remedies!**

Azarcon - A bright orange powder. Also known as Rueda, Coral, Maria Luisa, Alarcon, Liga. Used for an upset stomach or indigestion ("empacho"). This remedy contains almost 100% lead.

Albayaalde - A white powder. Used for an upset stomach or indigestion ("empacho"). This remedy may contain up to 37% lead.

Greta - A yellow powder. Used for an upset stomach or indigestion ("empacho"). This remedy contains almost 100% lead.

Pay~loo~ah - A red powder. Used for rashes or fever.

Ghasard - A brown powder. Used to aid digestion.

Bala Goli - A round, flat, black bean that is dissolved in "gripe water." Used to treat stomachaches.

Kandu - A red powder. Used to treat stomachaches.

Kohl (Alkohol) - A black powder. Used as a cosmetic eye make-up and also applied to skin infections and the navel of newborn children.

Any amount of these home remedies is poisonous to children and adults. **Do not use these remedies!**

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