

GETTING THE LEAD OUT

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Did you know that it is estimated that 60 millions U.S. homes have lead based paint? As early as 1786 Benjamin Franklin had questioned the safety of lead based paint. However, it was not until 1978 that the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission banned the use of residential paints containing more than 0.06% lead by weight. Lead based paint is found more often in pre-1960 housing units, although houses constructed prior to 1978 may contain lead based paint.

Children are more likely to suffer adverse effects from lead. One of the reasons for this is if a child swallows materials containing lead they absorb 40-50% of the lead, compared to 5-15% that would be absorbed by an adult. Children under 5 are especially susceptible if you live in a home with lead paint. This is due to the following reasons: they are on the floor where lead dust accumulates, they put everything in their mouths, their blood-brain barrier is poorly formed and allows lead to more easily enter the central nervous system and their brains are undergoing rapid development and are especially vulnerable to lead damage. It is important for parents to know that some of the effects of lead poisoning are irreversible, which is why prevention is key. According to the CDC about 1 in 22 children in America have high levels of lead in their blood. Lead poisoning is not contagious, it comes from contact with lead.

What are the signs of lead poisoning?

Poor hearing, speech, language and coordination, fatigue, drowsiness and sleep problems, loss of appetite, stomach aches, constipation, headaches, irritability, dizziness and nervousness, memory and concentration problems, and irritability.

What adverse health effects can occur with chronic lead poisoning?

Impaired blood formation, alteration of the central and peripheral nervous systems, high blood pressure, muscle and joint pain, decreased sex drive and fertility issues, miscarriages, birth defects, lower birth weight, learning and behavioral problems, and liver and kidney disorders

As lead levels increase so does the potential health effects. At levels above 80 mcg/dL a person may have the following: blue lines on gums, uncontrollable shaking of hands, wrist and foot drop, hallucinations, brain damage, coma and death.

If your child exhibits signs of lead poisoning you should notify your physician or nurse practitioner, so that blood testing can be done, if indicated by your physician or nurse practitioner.

How can the risk of lead poisoning be decreased?

- 1. Good housekeeping. Regularly clean floors, window sills and other surfaces.**
- 2. Keep play areas clean. Wash bottles, pacifiers, toys and stuffed animals regularly.**
- 3. Keep your children well-nourished, by providing meals low in fat and high in iron and calcium, which can be found in spinach and dairy products.**
- 4. Wash children's hands often, especially before they eat and before nap and bedtime.**
- 5. Keep children from chewing window sills, cribs, playpens and other painted surfaces such as old painted furniture.**
- 6. Clean or remove shoes before entering your home to avoid tracking in lead from soil.**
- 7. Don't burn painted wood, as it may contain lead.**
- 8. Don't remove lead paint yourself, it must be done by a professional.**
- 9. If a parent works in construction, demolition or painting, with batteries, or in a radiator repair shop or lead factory, or if your hobby involves lead you may unknowingly bring lead home on your hands or clothing. If you work in lead or your hobby involves lead, change your clothes and shower before coming into contact with your children. You should also wash your clothes separately from the rest of your families.**
- 10. Do not allow children to play with old painted toys.**
- 11. If you think your home might have plumbing with lead or lead solder contact your local health department to find out about testing your water. If you think your plumbing might have lead in it: use only cold water for drinking and cooking, and run water for 15 - 30 seconds before drinking it, especially if you have not used your water for a few hours.**
- 12. Talk to your landlord, if you rent, if you have peeling or chipping paint.**

If lead based paint is in good condition in most cases it is not a hazard. Removing lead based paint improperly can increase the danger to your family of lead poisoning.

If you have questions about lead based paint please feel free to contact Derek Walton from Hoosier Uplands Environmental Services Department. Derek's telephone number is 812-883-5368 or 1-800-487-8890. Hoosier Uplands provides

Certified Lead Abatement Supervisors, Risk Assessors/Inspectors and Clearance Examiners for the evaluation of lead based paint hazards in housing. The lead based paint inspection is a critical first step in solving the lead problem in housing throughout the agencies service area. A risk assessment tells you if there are any sources of serious lead exposure (such as peeling paint and lead dust. It also tells you what actions to take to address these hazards.

Information for this article was obtained from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Their website is www.epa.gov.