

**Project Fundred and Operation Paydirt
in coordination with the
New Orleans Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program**

LEAD POISONING RISKS AND CONTROL REFERENCE GUIDE

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT LEAD

What is Lead?

Lead is a toxic metal that was used in a variety of products in the past and remains in the environment today.

Where Does Lead Come From?

The most common sources of lead in our environment come from:

- Lead Paint: Chipping paint creates dust which contaminates the floor, walls and windowsills of homes.
- Lead residue in the soil which is leftover from gasoline and from dust created by lead paint
- Lead can also come from water when plumbing pipes have lead in them.

How is it Absorbed?

Lead can be eaten or inhaled. Eating lead paint chips is **not** the only way that children absorb lead. In fact, the **most common way** children absorb lead is by breathing lead dust and having lead residue on their hands or toys and then transferring hands and toys to their mouths.

Who is at risk?

Young children aged 0-6 years old are at the highest risk for two reasons

- They are young and developing so the lead affects their bodies more readily than it affects older children and adults
- Young children are more likely to put their hands in their mouth and play in the dirt or crawl across the floor contaminating themselves

Is there a difference between having elevated lead and having lead poisoning?

Yes, there is a difference between having lead in your body and having lead poisoning. Lead poisoning is a condition that results from having high levels of lead in your body for a long time and not treating the issue. Lead takes the place of essential minerals in the body and slows development. If caught early, steps can be taken to prevent further exposure and stop the ill effects of lead.

How do I know if I have lead in my body?

The only way to know if you have unsafe levels of lead in your body is to get tested! The symptoms of lead poisoning usually appear after the lead has done significant damage. The effects of lead poisoning are irreversible so get tested before you suspect lead! Your doctor will screen you for lead with a simple finger prick.

What do you do if you or someone you know has lead in their body?

There are some simple steps to take that will reduce the amount of lead children come into contact with. These steps include:

- 1) Make sure children's hands and toys are washed all of the time but especially before eating

- 2) Clean your home often and follow these DO's and DON'Ts
 - DO use wet or damp mops and sponges
 - DO use all purpose cleaners
 - DON'T use a broom if dust is present
 - DON'T beat or shake rugs
- 3) Take off your shoes when you come home to prevent bringing in contaminated soil
- 4) Make sure children play in grassy areas instead of exposed soil.
- 5) When cooking, use cold water and let the tap run for about 15 seconds before using the water.
- 6) Eat foods high in calcium, iron and vitamin c such as green vegetables, milk, beans and fruit. Additionally, reduce intake of fried and fatty foods.

RESOURCES & CONTACTS

The most important tool in lead exposure prevention is knowledge. Here are some resources to help you identify lead risk and recognize the symptoms of lead exposure.

**For national resources, up to date information, and specific high risk products visit:
National Safety Council General Lead Info Website Page**

<http://www.nsc.org/resources/issues/lead.aspx>

If you suspect lead exposure in your home or community, click this link to find local resources

National Safety Council Lead Contact Page

http://www.nsc.org/resources/issues/gov_contacts.aspx