



keeping your children



safe  
from  
lead  
poisoning

a handbook for parents

# the simple facts.

## **What is lead poisoning?**

A person is lead poisoned when too much lead gets into their body. Lead can be in many everyday materials around us, including paint, dust, and soil. Lead poisoning is a serious but preventable disease. Children are at greater risk than adults for lead poisoning.

## **How do children get lead into their bodies?**

Ordinary dust and dirt may contain lead. Lead-based paint hazards in homes built before 1978 are the leading causes of lead poisoning in children. Children can get lead in their bodies if they swallow or breathe dust contaminated with lead, especially if they play in contaminated dust or dirt, then put their hands or toys in their mouths.

## **What does lead poisoning do to my child?**

Lead poisoning can cause permanent problems such as learning problems and lowered intelligence in your child.

## **How can I find out if my child has lead poisoning?**

A quick and simple blood test is the only way to tell for sure if your child has lead in his blood. Your doctor or health department can test your child for lead.

## **How do I know if my child needs a lead test?**

If your child comes into contact with old paint, you should have him tested. Children 9 months of age to 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years of age are at greatest risk of lead poisoning because lead can permanently harm their developing brains. Children 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>–6 years old also have a high risk of lead poisoning and should get tested.



# What can I do to prevent my child from getting lead poisoning?

## Follow these simple steps to protect your children:

- If you live in a home built before 1978, it may have been painted with lead-based paint. Keep the area where your children play clean and dust-free. Wet-mop floors. Wet-wipe toys and windows sills. Check windows, doors and walls for chipped or crumbling paint.
- Wash pacifiers when they fall on the floor.
- Wash your children's hands often—before meals, naptime, and bedtime. Teach them to wash their own hands when they are old enough, and make sure they do it.
- Cover dirt yards with grass or mulch. Plant grass or bushes near the house to keep dust and dirt away from the inside of your home.
- Make sure your child does not chew on anything covered with paint.
- Be aware that some herbal remedies, such as Azarcon and Greta, may have a lot of lead.
- Do not cook, store, or make food in leaded crystal.
- Treat all peeling paint as if it has lead. Don't remove old paint with a dry method like sanding—this will create contaminated dust.
- If you are exposed to lead at work, do not bring lead home—change into clean clothes at work before coming home and wash your work clothes separately.
- Give your child healthy meals and snacks. They limit the amount of lead that can get into your child's body. Your children should eat foods high in iron and calcium every day, such as: lean meat, chicken, tuna, turkey, peas, cereals, potatoes with skin, milk, cheese, and yogurt.





**florida department of health**  
**childhood lead poisoning surveillance program**

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