

CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING PREVENTION

1. Lead is harmful to children.

Lead can damage a child's brain and nervous system. Lead exposure is especially dangerous for children under the age of six because their rapidly growing and developing bodies absorb more lead. It can cause permanent learning and behavioral problems that make it difficult for children to succeed in school.

2. A blood lead test is the only way to know if a child has lead poisoning.

Most children with lead poisoning do not look or act sick. Children at highest risk for lead exposure are those in government assisted health programs and those who live or spend time in older housing. **Old housing may have deteriorating or disturbed lead-based paint and lead-contaminated soil and dust.**

Children at risk of lead exposure should be tested at both one and two years of age. Additionally, at risk children three to six years old, who were not tested at ages one and two years old, should have a blood lead test. Parents can talk to their child's doctor about getting tested for lead.

3. Most children get lead poisoned from deteriorating lead paint in homes built before 1978 or from soil containing lead from gasoline residue when the following occurs:

- Lead-based paint chips or peels
- Lead-based paint is disturbed during repairs or renovations
- Lead contaminates soil along roadways, near buildings, and homes
- Lead dust from paint and soil accumulates in and around homes
- Lead dust settles on bare soil around the home where children play
- Lead dust settles on toys, fingers, and other things children put in their mouths

4. Other sources of childhood lead poisoning include:

- Work clothes, shoes, or workers exposed to lead on the job. A few of the jobs with exposure to lead are lead smelting, making or recycling batteries, and repairing radiators.
- Handmade ceramic tableware, especially imported ceramics decorated with lead-based glaze or paint
- Some toys, jewelry, and other painted objects
- Traditional home remedies, including Azarcon, Greta, Pay-loo-ah, and some Ayurvedic and Chinese remedies
- Traditional cosmetics, including Surma and Sindoor
- Some imported spices, candies, and other food products
- Water stored in a water crock or running through plumbing that contains lead

5. Eating healthy foods can help keep children safe from lead.

Serve children healthy meals and snacks at least every 3-4 hours including:

- Protein, such as lean meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, beans, peas, and unsalted nuts and seeds
- Vegetables, in a variety of colors like dark green, red, orange, yellow and purple

- Fruits, like fresh, frozen or canned fruits without added sugar
- Whole grains, like whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, quinoa and brown rice
- Dairy products, such as milk, soymilk, nut milks, or yogurt without added sugar

Limit foods with:

- Added sugar, like candy, soda, sugary breakfast cereal, sweet treats and granola bars
- Added fat, like fried foods, fast foods, chips, pork rinds and other processed foods

6. Parents and caregivers can also prevent childhood lead poisoning by:

- Wiping clean or taking off shoes before entering the home
- Washing children’s hands and toys often
- If lead-based paint is on any surface inside or outside of the home, wet mop and wash surfaces often
- When painting or remodeling, always follow “lead-safe” work practices:
 - Use plastic sheeting on the ground and furniture while working
 - Wet surfaces before sanding and scraping
 - Wet mop the area with an all-purpose cleaner at the end of the day
 - If hiring workers, ensure they are properly certified (California Department of Public Health for abatement, United States Environmental Protection Agency for renovation)

7. Don’t take lead home from your job.

- Change into clean clothes and shoes before getting into your car or going home. Bag dirty clothes and shoes.
- Wash your face and hands with soap and water before leaving work.
- Take a shower and wash your hair as soon as you get home. It is better to shower at work if you can.
- Wash work clothes separately from all other clothes. Run the empty washing machine again after the work clothes to rinse the lead out.

8. Free blood lead testing is available for most children.

Children who receive services from Medi-Cal or Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) are eligible for free testing. Private health insurance plans will also pay for the test.

To find out about eligibility for Medi-Cal, call: 1(800) 880-5305.

9. The Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at the local health department can provide more information.

