

FAQs

WHY IS LEAD A PROBLEM?

APPROXIMATELY 310,000 U.S. CHILDREN AGED 1-5 YEARS HAVE BLOOD LEAD LEVELS GREATER THAN THE CDC RECOMMENDED LEVEL OF 10 MICROGRAMS OF LEAD PER DECILITER OF BLOOD. LEAD POISONING CAN AFFECT NEARLY EVERY SYSTEM IN THE BODY. BECAUSE LEAD POISONING OFTEN OCCURS WITH NO OBVIOUS SYMPTOMS, IT FREQUENTLY GOES UNRECOGNIZED. LEAD POISONING CAN CAUSE LEARNING DISABILITIES, BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS, AND, AT VERY HIGH LEVELS, SEIZURES, COMA, AND EVEN DEATH.

HOW ARE CHILDREN EXPOSED TO LEAD?

THE MAJOR SOURCE OF LEAD EXPOSURE AMONG U.S. CHILDREN IS LEAD-BASED PAINT AND LEAD-CONTAMINATED DUST FOUND IN DETERIORATING BUILDINGS. LEAD-BASED PAINTS WERE BANNED FOR USE IN HOUSING IN 1978. HOWEVER, APPROXIMATELY 24 MILLION HOUSING UNITS IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE DETERIORATED LEADED PAINT AND ELEVATED LEVELS OF LEAD-CONTAMINATED HOUSE DUST. MORE THAN 4 MILLION OF THESE DWELLINGS ARE HOMES TO ONE OR MORE YOUNG CHILDREN.

OTHER SOURCES OF LEAD POISONING ARE RELATED TO:

- HOBBIES (MAKING STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS)
- WORK (RECYCLING OR MAKING AUTOMOBILE BATTERIES)
- DRINKING WATER (LEAD PIPES, SOLDER, BRASS FIXTURES, VALVES CAN ALL LEACH LEAD)
- HOME HEALTH REMEDIES (AZARCON AND GRETA, WHICH ARE USED FOR UPSET STOMACH OR INDIGESTION; PAY-LOO-AH, WHICH IS USED FOR RASH OR FEVER).

WHO IS AT RISK?

- CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 6 YEARS BECAUSE THEY ARE GROWING SO RAPIDLY. THEY ALSO TEND TO PUT THEIR HANDS OR OTHER OBJECTS INTO THEIR MOUTHS, AND THEIR BRAINS CONTINUE TO DEVELOP UNTIL AROUND AGE SIX.
- CHILDREN FROM ALL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LEVELS CAN BE AFFECTED BY LEAD POISONING, ALTHOUGH CHILDREN LIVING AT OR BELOW THE POVERTY LINE WHO LIVE IN OLDER HOUSING ARE AT GREATEST RISK.
- CHILDREN OF SOME RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS AND THOSE LIVING IN OLDER HOUSING ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY LEAD. FOR EXAMPLE, 3% OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN COMPARED TO 1.3% OF CAUCASIAN CHILDREN HAVE ELEVATED BLOOD LEAD LEVELS.

CAN LEAD POISONING BE PREVENTED?

LEAD POISONING IS ENTIRELY PREVENTABLE. THE KEY IS STOPPING CHILDREN FROM COMING INTO CONTACT WITH LEAD AND TREATING CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN POISONED BY LEAD.

- LEAD HAZARDS IN A CHILD'S ENVIRONMENT MUST BE REMOVED

- **PUBLIC AND HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS NEED TO BE EDUCATED ABOUT LEAD POISONING AND HOW TO PREVENT IT**
- **CHILDREN WHO ARE AT RISK OF LEAD POISONING NEED TO BE TESTED, AND, IF NECESSARY, TREATED.**

WHAT CAN THE PUBLIC AND PARENTS DO TO REDUCE BLOOD LEAD LEVELS?

- **ASK A DOCTOR TO TEST YOUR CHILD IF HE/SHE IS 6 YEARS OF AGE OR YOUNGER OR YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR CHILD BEING EXPOSED TO LEAD.**
- **CONTACT A PRIVATE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING FIRM ABOUT TESTING PAINT AND DUST FROM YOUR HOME FOR LEAD IF YOU LIVE IN A HOUSE OR APARTMENT BUILT BEFORE 1978, ESPECIALLY IF YOUNG CHILDREN LIVE WITH YOU OR VISIT YOU.**
- **DAMP-MOP FLOORS, DAMP-WIPE SURFACES, AND FREQUENTLY WASH A CHILD'S HANDS, PACIFIERS, AND TOYS TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO LEAD.**
- **USE ONLY COLD WATER FROM THE TAP FOR DRINKING, COOKING, AND FOR MAKING BABY FORMULA. HOT WATER IS MORE LIKELY TO CONTAIN HIGHER LEVELS OF LEAD, AND MOST OF THE LEAD IN HOUSEHOLD WATER USUALLY COMES FROM THE PLUMBING IN YOUR HOUSE, NOT FROM THE LOCAL WATER SUPPLY.**
- **AVOID USING HOME REMEDIES (SUCH AS AZARCON, GRETA, PAY-LOO-AH) AND COSMETICS (SUCH AS KOHL, ALKOHL) THAT CONTAIN LEAD.**
- **TAKE BASIC STEPS TO DECREASE YOUR EXPOSURE TO LEAD (FOR EXAMPLE, BY SHOWERING AND CHANGING CLOTHES AFTER FINISHING THE TASK) IF YOU REMODEL BUILDINGS BUILT BEFORE 1978 OR IF YOUR WORK OR HOBBIES INVOLVE WORKING WITH LEAD-BASED PRODUCTS.**