

Lead Q & A

1. How are children exposed to lead?

- a. Lead-based paint and lead contaminated dust are the most hazardous sources of lead for U.S. children. Lead-based paints were banned for use in housing in 1978. All houses built before 1978 are likely to contain some lead-based paint. However, it is the deterioration of this paint that causes a problem. Approximately 24 million housing units 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.

2. Who is most at risk?

- a. Children under the age of 6 years old are at risk because they are growing so rapidly and because they tend to put their hands or other objects, which may be contaminated with lead dust, into their mouths.

3. How common is lead in soil?

- a. Almost all of lead in soil comes from lead-based paint chips flaking from homes, factory pollution, and from the use of leaded gasoline. Over time, lead builds up in soil. Lead levels in soil are usually higher in cities, near roadways and industries that use lead, and next to homes where crumbling lead paint has fallen into the soil.

4. Is lead in soil dangerous for my family?

- a. The danger of the lead in soil depends on:
 - the amount of lead in the soil around your house
 - and the amount of soil that gets into your child

The amount of lead in soil is measured in parts per million (ppm). The greater the amount of lead in soil, the higher the ppm number. Soil naturally has small amounts of lead in it, about 50 ppm. 200-500 ppm of lead is commonly found in city soil. 1,000 ppm is a high amount of lead in soil, and is defined as hazardous waste.

5. How does lead from soil get into the body?

- a. Lead in dirt clings to fingers, toys and other objects that children normally put in their mouths. This is the most common way that lead in soil gets into a child. Lead in soil does not pass through unbroken skin.

6. How can I protect my children from lead?

- a. TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES BEFORE ENTERING THE HOUSE. Make sure they are wiped well on a doormat outside the house. This will help prevent lead dust and soil from getting into the house.
- b. CHANGE OUT OF WORK CLOTHES and take a shower before coming home if you work with lead at your job. Lead dust brought home on the clothes of workers can spread in the house and poison children. Lead is used in many workplaces such as radiator repair shops, battery manufacturing plants and lead smelters.
- c. TEST PAINTED SURFACES FOR LEAD in any area that you plan to remodel, before you begin the work. If lead is in the paint, learn how to handle the paint safely. If the work is

not done the right way, lead dust can scatter and poison your family, pets, neighbors and workers.

- d. ENCOURAGE HEALTHY EATING HABITS. Eating regular and healthy meals may make it harder for lead to hurt your child. Meals should include fruits and vegetables as well as calcium-rich foods (milk, cheese, yogurt, corn tortillas, tofu or bean curd) and iron-rich foods (meat, chicken, iron-fortified cereals, raisins, and dried fruit).
 - e. REGULARLY WASH CHILDREN'S HANDS AND TOYS. Hands and toys can become contaminated from household dust or exterior soil. Both are known lead sources.
- 7. What should I do if I believe my child has ingested lead?**
- a. Consult your child's primary care provider if you have concerns regarding lead exposure.