



# Resident Reporter

## Lead: It can weigh heavy on us

### True or False:

- T/F Lead exposure can harm young children and babies - even before they are born.
- T/F Even children who seem healthy can have high levels of lead in their bodies.
- T/F People can get lead in their bodies by breathing or swallowing lead dust, or by eating soil or paint chips containing lead.
- T/F People have many options for reducing lead hazards. In most cases, lead-based paint that is in good condition is not a hazard.
- T/F Removing lead-based paint improperly can increase the danger to you and your family.

### All True!

Many homes and apartments built before 1978 have paint that contains high levels of lead. Lead from paint, chips and dust can pose serious health hazards if not taken care of properly.

Federal law requires that individuals receive certain information before renting, buying or renovating pre-1978 housing:

**Landlords** have to disclose known information on lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards before leases take effect. Leases must include a disclosure form about lead-based paint.

**Sellers** have to disclose known information on lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards before selling a home. Sales contracts must include a disclosure form about lead-based paint. Buyers have up to 10 days to check for lead.

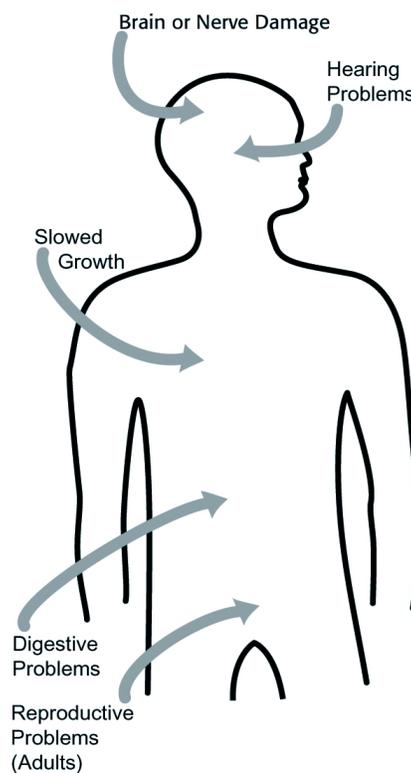
**Renovators** have to give you the EPA pamphlet *Protect Your Family From Lead In Your Home* before starting work.

### Lead gets in the body in many ways

People can get lead in their body if they:

- Breathe in lead dust
- Put their hands or other objects covered with lead dust in their mouths.
- Eat paint chips or soil that contains lead

Lead is more dangerous to children than adults because: children's brains and nervous systems are more sensitive to the damaging effects of lead; children's growing bodies absorb more lead; and babies and young children often put their hands and other objects in their mouths. These objects can have lead dust on them.



### Lead's Effects

If not detected early, children with high levels of lead in their bodies can suffer from:

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Behavior and learning problems (such as hyperactivity)
- Slowed growth
- Hearing problems
- Headaches

Lead is also harmful to adults. Adults can suffer from:

- Difficulties during pregnancy
- Other reproductive problems (in both men and women)
- Digestive problems
- Nerve disorders
- Memory and concentration problems
- Muscle and joint pain

## CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

### Checking Your Family for Lead

To reduce your child's exposure to lead, get your child checked, have your home tested (especially if your home has paint in poor condition and was built before 1978), and fix any hazards you may have. Children's blood lead levels tend to increase rapidly from 6 to 12 months of age, and tend to peak at 18 to 24 months of age. Consult your doctor for advice on testing your children. A simple blood test can detect high levels of lead.

Blood tests are usually recommended for

- Children at ages 1 and 2
- Children or other family members who have been exposed to high levels of lead.
- Children who should be tested under your state or local health-screening plan.

Your doctor can explain what the test results mean and if more testing will be needed.

### Identifying lead hazards

**Lead-based paint** is usually not a hazard if it is in good condition, and it is not on an impact or friction surface, like a window. It is defined by the federal government as paint with lead levels greater than or equal to 1.0 milligram per square centimeter or more than 0.5% by weight.

**Deteriorating lead-based paint (peeling, chipping, chalking, cracking or damaged)** is a hazard and needs immediate attention. It may also be a hazard when found on surfaces that children can chew or that get a lot of wear-and-tear, such as windows and window sills, doors and door frames, stairs, railings, banisters and porches.

**Lead dust** can form when lead-based paint is dry scraped, dry sanded or heated. Dust also forms when painted surfaces bump or rub together. Lead chips and dust can get on surfaces and object that people touch. Settled lead dust can re-enter the air when people vacuum, sweep, or walk through it.

**Lead in soil** can be a hazard when children play in bare soil or when people bring soil into the home on their shoes.

### Checking Your Home For Lead

You can get your home checked for lead in one of two ways, or both:

**A paint inspection** tells you the lead content of every different type of painted surface in your home; however, it won't tell you whether the paint is a hazard or how you should deal with it.

**A risk assessment** tells you if there are any sources of serious lead exposure (such as peeling paint and lead dust). It also tells you what actions to take to address these hazards.

Home test kits for lead are available, but may not always be accurate. Consumers should not rely on these tests before doing renovations or to assure safety. Contact your local lead poisoning prevention program for more information, or call (800) 424-LEAD for a list of contacts in your area.

### What you can do now to protect your family

If you suspect that your home has lead hazards, you can take some immediate steps to reduce your family's risk:

If you rent, **notify** your landlord of peeling or chipping paint.

**Clean** up paint chips immediately

**Clean** floors, window frames, window sills, and other surfaces weekly. Use a mop or sponge with warm water and a general all-purpose cleaner or a cleaner made specifically for lead. **Remember: never mix ammonia and bleach products together since they can form a dangerous gas.**

Thoroughly rinse sponges and mop heads after cleaning dirty or dusty areas.

*Children with good diets absorb less lead.*

### For more information

The National Lead Information Center  
(800) 424-LEAD or (800) 424-5323

[www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead) or [www.hud.gov/offices/lead/](http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/)