

# Lead Poisoning

## What is Lead?

Lead is a poisonous metal that you and your family could be around every day. The good news is, you can keep your family safe and get the lead out!

## \* What You Should Know

### **Lead can come from your house, where you work, or other common things:**

- Paint and dust in older homes or apartments, especially dust from construction or repairs
- Some items made in other countries like pottery (including Mexican bean pots), ceramics, crystal, Mexican candy, make up, glazed pots, and folk medicine (“greta” and “azarcon”)
- Recalled toys and toy jewelry that have been shown to contain too much lead
- Jobsites like auto refinishing, construction, and plumbing
- Dirt and drinking water from old plumbing

### **Good nutrition can help keep the lead out.**

- Healthy foods with iron and calcium may keep lead out of your child’s blood.
  - o Iron is in lean red meats, beans, peanut butter, whole grains, and enriched breads and cereals. To better absorb the iron in foods, eat vitamin C foods — like oranges, strawberries, broccoli, bell pepper, and juice — and iron foods together.
  - o Calcium is in milk, yogurt, cheese, and green leafy vegetables like spinach.
- Give your child three meals and two or three snacks every day. Your child’s stomach absorbs more lead when it is empty.

\* **FACT #1 - Most children get lead poisoning from breathing or swallowing old paint or paint dust from homes and apartments built before 1978.**

When old paint cracks and peels, it makes dangerous dust. The dust is so small you cannot see it. Children can get lead poisoning when they breathe and swallow the dust on their hands and toys.

\* **FACT #2 - Lead poisoning can cause learning and behavior problems. Some of the effects of lead poisoning may never go away.**

- Children under 6 years old are most likely to get sick from lead. Even low levels of lead in your child’s body can:
  - o Slow down growth and development
  - o Damage hearing and speech
  - o Make it hard to pay attention and learn
- If you are pregnant, lead can harm your baby.

\* **FACT #3 - A lead test is the only way to know if your family has been around too much lead and could have lead poisoning.**

- Most children with lead poisoning do not look or act sick. Ask your doctor to test you or your child for lead.
- There is no “safe” level of lead in the body.

## What You Can Do

### Test your home for lead.

- If your home was built before 1978, have it checked by a licensed lead inspector.
- Do not try to remove old lead paint yourself! Sanding or scraping lead paint can make dangerous lead dust.

### Ask your doctor to test your family for lead poisoning.

### Keep your child away from lead sources.

- Try to keep your child from eating or chewing on things other than food — especially dirt or painted surfaces like windowsills or doors.
- Wash your child's hands often, especially before eating and sleeping, and also after playing outside or on the floor.
- Vacuum and mop floors and clean around windows and play areas.
- If you have old paint in your home, cover painted areas or use tape to cover chipping or peeling paint.
- Keep outside lead from coming into your home — leave shoes and work clothes at the door and wash door rugs often.



### Use cold, filtered water.

- Use bottled water or a pitcher with a filter if you think your drinking water has lead in it.
- Run the tap water cold for 1-2 minutes in the morning and then fill a pitcher with water for drinking, cooking, or formula preparation.
- Do not use hot tap water to prepare baby formula or for cooking. Hot water may contain higher levels of lead. Boiling water will not reduce the amount of lead.

### Prepare and store foods safely.

- Store food in glass, stainless steel, or plastic containers.
- Do not use glazed pottery to cook, serve, or store food unless you know it is lead-free.
- Clean counters before preparing food.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating.



## \* Who to Call

For blood lead testing, call your doctor. If your child has Medicaid, you can call Texas Health Steps at 1-877-TXSTEPS if you need help finding health care.

If you have questions about lead poisoning, contact the Texas Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 1-800-588-1248 or <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/lead/parents.shtml>

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