



# LEAD

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development • Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control

A young child with dark hair, wearing a dark blue jacket, is riding a silver tricycle. The child is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred brick wall.

*“Despite progress, lead poisoning remains one of the top childhood environmental health problems today.”*

*President’s Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children*

## Did you know...?

- Many homes built before 1978 have lead-based paint?
- 3.8 million homes in the United States have peeling or chipping lead-based paint or high levels of lead in dust?
- Infants, children under six, and pregnant women should have their blood tested for lead?
- In the United States, children from poor families are eight times more likely to get lead poisoned?

## What is it?

Lead is a toxic metal used in a variety of products and materials. When lead is absorbed into the body, it can cause damage to the central nervous system and vital organs like the brain, kidneys, nerves, and blood cells. Symptoms of lead poisoning include headaches, stomachaches, nausea, tiredness, and irritability, which may also occur with the flu and some viruses. Lead can also harm children without causing obvious symptoms. Both inside and outside the home, old, deteriorated paint releases lead, which mixes with dust and soil. Children who ingest lead or lead dust by putting their hands or other objects in their mouths, by eating paint chips, or by playing in lead-contaminated soil may become poisoned.

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In homes built before 1978, treat peeling paint as a lead hazard.



## What can you do?

### 1. In your home, if it was built before 1978:

- Have it checked for lead hazards by a professional (including the soil).
- Mop smooth floors (using a damp mop) frequently to control dust.
- Vacuum carpets and upholstery to remove dust, preferably using a vacuum with a HEPA filter or a "higher efficiency" collection bag.
- Take off shoes when entering the house.
- Pick up loose paint chips carefully then HEPA vacuum.
- Take precautions to avoid creating lead dust when remodeling, renovating, or maintaining your home.

### 2. For your child:

- Frequently wash your child's hands and toys to reduce exposure.
- Use cold tap water for drinking and cooking.
- Avoid using home remedies (such as arzacón, greta, or pay-loo-ah) and cosmetics (such as kohl or alcoh) that contain lead.
- Have your child's blood lead level tested at age 1 and 2. Children from 3 to 6 years of age should have their blood tested, if they have not been tested before and:
  - They live in or regularly visit a house built before 1950;
  - They live in or regularly visit a home built before 1978 with on-going or recent renovations or remodeling; or
  - They have a sibling or playmate who has or did have lead poisoning.

### For more information...

Visit HUD's website at [www.hud.gov/offices/lead](http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead) for more information about addressing health hazards in homes or to learn if HUD has a Healthy Homes program in your community. From this website, you can download a copy of "Help Yourself to A Healthy Home" for more practical steps you can take to make your home a healthy home.

### Other Federal Resources

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control (OHHLHC)

[www.hud.gov/offices/lead](http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead) or call (202) 755-1785 x. 104

The National Lead Information Center

1-800-424-LEAD (5323)

[www.epa.gov/lead/leadpbed.htm](http://www.epa.gov/lead/leadpbed.htm)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/lead.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/lead.htm)

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

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

U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

[www.osha-slc.gov/SLTC/lead/index.html](http://www.osha-slc.gov/SLTC/lead/index.html)

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

[www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) or call

1-800-638-8270

### Other Resources

Dust created by opening and closing windows is a common lead hazard.



*Photo by: January E. Jones, Improving Kids' Environment*

Healthy Indoor Air for America's Homes

[www.healthyindoorair.org/facts\\_lead.html](http://www.healthyindoorair.org/facts_lead.html)

Community Environmental Health Resource Center (CEHRC)

[www.cehrc.org/tools/lead/leaddust/background.cfm](http://www.cehrc.org/tools/lead/leaddust/background.cfm)

Alliance for Healthy Homes

[www.afhh.org](http://www.afhh.org) or (202) 543-1147

National Center for Healthy Housing

[www.centerforhealthyhousing.org](http://www.centerforhealthyhousing.org)

Parents Against Lead (PAL)

(773) 324-7824

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