

# You Can Prevent Lead Poisoning



## Lead Screening



Louisiana Healthy Homes Collaborative  
for Louisiana Families and Children



## What is lead and how is it used?

Lead is a **highly toxic heavy metal** found abundantly in the Earth's crust. It has been used in many products such as paint, gasoline, batteries, cosmetics, hair dyes, pipes and toys.

## Where is lead found?

Lead can be found in:

- Drinking water
- Soil
- Household dust
- Batteries
- Cosmetics
- Hair dyes
- Old painted toys and furniture
- Some crystal, antique pewter, porcelain and glazed pottery
- Imported toys and crayons
- Folk remedies such as Greta, Pay-loo-ah, Kohl, Kandu and Azarcon
- Craft, art and stained glass supplies
- Ammunition and fishing sinkers
- House paint manufactured before 1978
- Current industrial, specialty paints such as marine paint
- Imported vinyl mini-blinds
- Old lead-glazed bath tubs

**FACT** Lead poisoning is very common. Millions of children, of all ages, are affected every year.

**FACT** Lead dust can be invisible.

## How can my child get lead poisoning?

- Children generally get lead poisoning by **breathing invisible lead dust or swallowing lead chips, dust or flakes** from deteriorating lead-based paint on buildings, barns, rental units and homes (painted prior to 1978).
- Another source is household dust from deteriorating exterior and interior paint, soil brought in from outside through footprints, dust blown in through open windows and doors and dust created when painted doors and windows rub against themselves when opening and closing.
- Drinking water can contribute to lead poisoning when it passes through old, corroded lead pipes, brass fixtures and solder on plumbing lines.
- Playing in soil contaminated with lead from past leaded gasoline use, flooding or dust from peeling lead paint can be a source. The lead dust gets caught under their fingernails, is inhaled or sometimes eaten.

- Dogs, cats and pets roll in the soil and bring it into the house on their fur. They play with the children, sleep in their beds and lay all over the house, spreading invisible lead dust.
- Parents who work in environments with lead bring it home on their clothes. Change work clothing that may contain lead dust before coming in contact with children.
- Dust and fumes from hobbies such as stained glass soldering or burning of lead wicks in candles can result in lead poisoning.

**Children touch anything and play with everything.**

## Why is lead poisoning so dangerous?

Lead poisoning is a buildup of lead in the body over a period of time. Lifelong learning and behavior problems result from this buildup.

### **So if it's not detected early, high levels of lead can cause:**

Lack of muscular coordination, poor eye-hand coordination and reaction time, convulsions, coma and death

### **Low levels can cause:**

Lower IQ or mental retardation  
Damage to the brain and nervous system  
Growth and developmental impairments  
Deficits in fine motor functions  
Changes in behavior such as hyperactivity, aggression and violence  
Learning disabilities  
Attention-deficit disorder  
Hearing problems  
Headaches

## **FACT**

**Children's brains and nervous systems are more sensitive.**



## Why is it important to have my child tested for lead?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found, among children tested each year, more than 300,000 under age 6 have dangerous blood lead levels in their bodies.

A person of any age should be tested if symptoms are present. Those include fatigue, sleep problems, hearing loss, changes in mood, nausea, prolonged stomach distress, headaches, tremors, weight loss, memory loss, seizures, anemia, reproductive failure, encephalopathy and coma. Pregnant women are at increased risk of miscarriages, stillbirths and low birth weight of their babies.

**Lead poisoning can cause permanent damage to your child.**

## How is a child tested for lead poisoning?

The way to find out if your child has lead poisoning is to have a **simple finger prick** by a health care provider.

## Where do I get my child tested?

To ensure the health and wellbeing of children, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals and its Office of Public Health have **mandated universal lead screening for children under 6 years old.**

**The American Academy of Pediatrics estimates one out of every four homes with children under age 6 has lead contamination.**

Your family pediatrician or your local parish health unit can screen your child with a blood test. Although lead testing is required in Louisiana, you may need to ask for it.



**FACT** Many children have no symptoms at the time of exposure to lead. Symptoms may not show up until a child is seriously poisoned.

## What can I do to protect my child from lead poisoning?

As a caring parent, there are many things you can do to safeguard your child.

### Keep your home clean and well maintained:

- Take shoes off at the door.
- Use wet or damp cleaning methods on solid floors, walls and counters, especially window sills.
- Use a HEPA vacuum for carpets.
- Clean window treatments, including blinds, with disposable wet wipes or cloths.
- If sponges are used, dispose of them after each use or use wet wipes and disposable wet mop cloths.
- Keep pets outside.

**FACT**  
Lead paint is sweet to taste; children will eat it.

**FACT** Children's growing bodies absorb lead easily.

### Keep yourself and your child clean:

- If you work in an environment that has lead products or have hobbies that involve lead products, shower and change clothes before you get into your vehicle. Clean tools and other items before you bring them home. Bring clothes that might be contaminated home in a plastic bag.
- Launder your work clothes separately from the rest of the laundry.
- Wash your hands before preparing food.
- Teach your children to wash their hands before they eat.
- Regularly clean pacifiers, bottles and toys.



## Small children put everything in their mouths.

### Keep your home safe:

- Use only cold tap water for drinking, cooking and mixing with baby formula. If your home was built before 1986, run the cold water for 1 to 2 minutes before using it when the water has been off for 6 or more hours. Boiling your water does not get rid of lead from old pipes. Call your health department about how to have your water tested for lead.
- If you have hobbies or crafts that contain lead, do not do them in your home.
- In houses, rental units or condos built prior to 1978, look for peeling or flaking paint. Until it can safely be removed, cover it with duct tape or contact paper. In rentals, let your landlord know about any peeling or chipping paint because they are legally required to repair lead problems. Keep your children away from all areas with peeling, chipping or flaking paint until it is repaired.

**IMPORTANT:** Follow lead safety practices before beginning and during any type of work in an older home.

When hiring someone to work on an older home (built before 1978) that may have lead paint, make sure the firm is a U.S. EPA Lead-Safe Certified firm and the supervisor is a certified renovator. Locate a certified firm.

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

The U.S. EPA Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) rule requires contractors to give the homeowner the EPA booklet entitled "Renovate Right." A certified firm will provide the appropriate documentation and use proper methods for dealing with lead paint.



**Keep your child lead safe all day:** Check out any facility where you leave your children for three hours or more per week.

In addition to the EPA Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) rule effective April 22, 2010, Louisiana has a law that requires day care facilities and institutions where children are cared for be maintained free of lead contamination. This information can be found in Title 51 of the Public Health - Sanitary Code - Part IV. Lead Poisoning Control. Part 105.A.

**Eat healthy:** A balanced diet may help minimize absorption of lead in the body and minimize its effects. Ensure good nutrition by serving children foods rich in iron and calcium.

Our bodies retain less lead when we eat healthy diets and when our stomachs are full. Feed children four to six times a day. A balanced diet that limits fat and provides enough calcium, iron and vitamin C has been shown to help reduce absorption of lead in the body and minimize its effects. Ensure good nutrition by serving children foods rich in calcium, iron and vitamin C every day.

### **Calcium-rich Foods:**

- Milk, cheese, yogurt
- Green, leafy vegetables
- Broccoli
- Calcium-fortified orange juice and other foods
- Enriched breads and cereals



### **Iron-rich Foods:**

- Lean red meats, fish, chicken
- Iron-fortified cereals
- Dark green, leafy vegetables
- Beans
- Dried fruits like raisins and prunes



### **Vitamin C-rich Foods:**

- Citrus fruit and juice (oranges, grapefruit, lemons, limes)
- Berries (strawberries, raspberries, blackberries)
- Fruit (kiwi, pineapple, watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, papaya)
- Tomatoes and tomato juice
- Some vegetables (green peppers, cabbage, broccoli, peas, sweet potato, onion, dark green)



## Learn more online:

CDC.gov/lead Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
EPA.gov/lead U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
HUD.gov/lead U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

### Louisiana Contacts:



Louisiana Healthy Homes and Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program  
1450 Poydras St., Suite 2046, New Orleans, LA 70112  
Phone: 504-568-8254

**Web address: [dhh.louisiana.gov/lead](http://dhh.louisiana.gov/lead)**

To learn more about healthy and sustainable housing, explore:



2858 Gourrier Ave., Baton Rouge, LA 70820

**Website: [LSUAgCenter.com/LaHouse](http://LSUAgCenter.com/LaHouse)**

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