

Fact Sheet on Lead

Today at least 4 million households have children living in them who are being exposed to lead. Approximately, half a million U.S. children ages 1-5 have blood lead levels above 5 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$), the reference level at which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends public health actions be initiated. Lead exposure can affect nearly every system in the body. Because lead exposure often occurs with no obvious symptoms, it frequently goes unrecognized.

What is LEAD?

- ⇒ Lead (Pb) is a heavy, toxic, poisonous chemical element.
- ⇒ Lead is commonly found in older houses, soil especially near roadways, old orchards, mining areas, industrial sites, near power plants, incinerators, landfills, and hazardous waste sites. People living near these hazardous sites may be exposed to lead and chemicals. Exposure to lead can happen from breathing workplace air or dust, eating contaminated foods, or drinking contaminated water. Children can be exposed from eating lead-based paint chips or playing in contaminated soil.
- ⇒ Lead is also found in some herbal remedies, cosmetics, jewelry, toys, water, lead glazed pottery and occupation/hobbies.



What is LEAD POISONING?

- ⇒ Lead poisoning is a serious but preventable public health problem that can result in long-lasting neurological damage to young children whose growing bodies are highly susceptible.
- ⇒ When too much lead ($\geq 5 \mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) gets into your body, it is called lead poisoning. Children are at greater risk than adults.
- ⇒ Lead is also brought into the environment through human activities.
- ⇒ Lead circulates in the bloodstream; it is then reabsorbed in the kidneys and the brain.
- ⇒ Lead poisoning can cause reduction in IQ, attention span and reading; increase in learning disabilities, hyperactivity and behavioral problems; impair growth, visual, motor function and hearing.

Why is Soil a Problem?

- ⇒ Contamination of soil has been linked to incinerators, hazardous waste sites, weathering of exterior leaded paint, fall-out from past use of leaded gasoline, and lead smelters.
- ⇒ There is a greater chance of contact with lead in the soil if there is not a good stand of grass or other ground cover.
- ⇒ Any time soil is bare and exposed there is a chance that lead dust can be generated.

Who is at Risk?

- ⇒ All 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.
- ⇒ Children living at or below poverty level who live in older housing are at greatest risk . Additionally, children of some racial and ethnic groups are disproportionately affected by lead.

How Can I know if My Child Has Lead Poisoning?

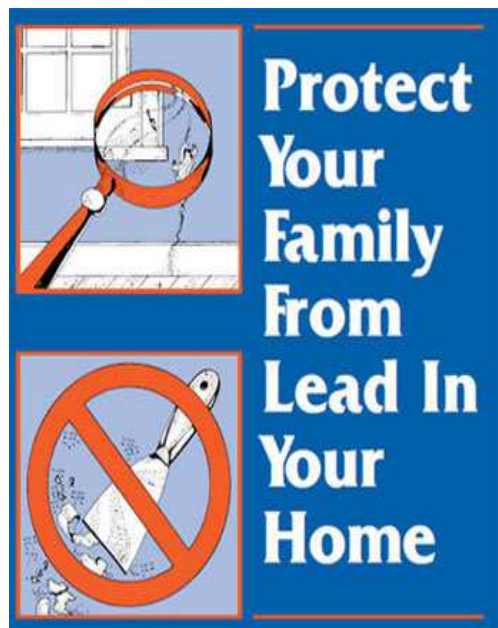
- ⇒ Children with lead poisoning do not look sick.
- ⇒ Children who look and act healthy may have high lead levels.
- ⇒ The only way to know if your child has lead poisoning is to have them tested.

What Does the Lead Test Consist of?

- ⇒ A health care worker will take only a small amount of your child's blood.
- ⇒ The test takes only a few minutes.
- ⇒ Children who are 1 to 6 years old are at a higher risk for lead poisoning should get tested.

What Can I Do to Prevent My Child From Getting Lead Poisoning?

- ⇒ Keep the area where your child plays clean and dust free.
- ⇒ Make sure your child does not chew on anything covered with paint.
- ⇒ Wash your child's hands often, especially before meals.
- ⇒ Give your child a healthy diet that includes foods with iron, calcium and vitamin C. A healthy diet can protect children from lead poisoning.



Any questions, contact:
Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at
(305) 470-6877