

Lead Information

Lead poisoning of children is a growing concern. Lead poisoning, one of the largest threats to young children under six (6) years of age, happens when children get too much lead in their blood. High lead levels can have many negative effects such as producing learning and behavior problems, damaging hearing, respiratory, nervous systems and the brain. One in 20 American children have too much lead in their bodies. In cities, the average increases.

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Checklist- Do I Have A Lead Hazard?

- ◆ Was my home built before 1978? Before 1950?
- ◆ Is there cracking, chipping or flaking paint in my home?
- ◆ Has my home been recently remodeled or renovated?
- ◆ Are my water pipes made of lead?
- ◆ Is lead in the soil outside my home?
- ◆ Does someone that is around my children or frequently visits my house work or have a hobby where lead is used?

Does Your Child Need To Be Screened For Lead Poisoning?

If you answered yes to any of the above or following questions, then it is in the best interest of your child to have a blood level screening done.

- ☞ Is your child eligible for or receiving benefits from WIC or Medicaid?
- ☞ Does the child live in or regularly visit a ZIP code determined to be a high risk based on the age of housing stock? (Allen County's High-risk zip codes are 46802, 46803, 46806, 46807, 46808).
- ☞ Does your child live in or regularly visit a home or daycare center built before 1978 with peeling and/or chipping paint, or been renovated within the last six months or ongoing or planned renovation?
- ☞ Does your child have a brother or sister, housemate, or playmate being followed or treated for lead poisoning with a blood level of 10 µg/dL or higher?
- ☞ Does your child live with an adult whose job or hobby involves exposure to lead (includes home repairs, auto repairs, furniture refinishing, firing ranges, casting lead fishing sinkers, boat repairs, and bullet making)?
- ☞ Does your child live near a busy street, and active lead smelter, or other industry likely to release lead?

- ☛ Does your family use imported or glazed ceramics for food preparation, storage, or as dinnerware?
- ☛ Does your child have medical findings consistent with lead poisoning (this includes any developmental delays, growth failure, anemia, hyperactivity, or undiagnosed seizures)?

Children With Lead Poisoning

Children with too much lead in their bodies don't appear to be sick. They don't have a cough, or cold, temperature or any other illness symptoms. Instead, they can have developmental problems such as delayed development, reading and learning problems, lowered IQ, hyperactivity and discipline problems. Higher doses can cause high blood pressure, anemia, and other problems in both children and adults.

The only way to tell if a child is lead poisoned is to have your health care provider test them. A small blood sample is taken to tell if lead is present in your child's blood. The test is as simple as pricking the child's finger. To get a more accurate account of the child's blood lead level a sample can be taken through the vein.

Usually children with lead in their body are also iron deficient. The body is seeking out iron, but confuses lead for the iron and absorbs the lead more readily. It is very important that lead poisoned children eat a well-balanced healthy diet containing foods with vitamin C, calcium, and iron.

What Is Lead And Where Is It Found?

Lead is a metallic element that occurs naturally. Lead has been used in paint, gasoline, pottery, crystal, construction, plumbing, battery recycling, car repair, and foundry casting, just to name a few. Lead was banned from household paint in 1978. Older houses, especially those built before 1950, pose a larger risk of having lead hazards because paint contained as much as 50% lead. Houses built after 1978 are not of concern for lead based paint on the walls or exterior of the house, but may have lead hazards in older furniture or toys that used lead based paint.

Not all lead-based paint is hazardous. If the paint is in good condition and not peeling or chipping, the risk of getting lead poisoning is not immediate, but does become a risk for the future. Once the paint starts to deteriorate it breaks down and forms a dust. Most lead poisoning doesn't come from the paint, but rather dust that contains lead. Windowsills tend to contain more chipping lead paint and lead dust. The opening and closing of the window causes friction between the window and the sill. This friction rubs the paint off, forming a dust. A tell tail sign of a lead-based paint hazard is a checkerboard pattern of dry, flaked paint in the windowsill.

Lead is also commonly found in soil. As a result of lead being used in gasoline, locations near busy streets tend to have higher amounts of lead in the soil. In addition, older homes with lead based paint on the outside of the house that has not been kept up, will peel and chip. The chips and dust fall onto the

ground, also making the soil a media for lead. Young children that play outside get dirty, put their hands in their mouth, and ingest dust, dirt, and potentially lead.

In addition, people that work with or near lead have it on their skin and clothing. When they enter a house they can bring lead in shoes, clothes and skin. If children play, hug, or jump on this person, they are coming into direct contact with lead. To avoid this, make sure lead soiled clothes are kept away from children and washed separately. Taking shoes off at the house entrance also reduces the chance of soil being dragged through the house.

Blood Lead Level (BLL)

Blood lead levels (BLL) are measured in micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$). If a child's blood lead level is 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ or higher it is too high. Different concentrations of lead have different effects. The higher the concentration of BLL, the worse the damage caused to the body is. The damage caused by lead is irreversible, but very preventable. There is no medication for lead poisoning until the BLL reaches numbers as high as 40. This is a very serious state. Chelation therapy is very hard on the body and the child may never return to a lead environment, or their BLL will skyrocket back up. Regular cleaning helps reduce lead hazards.

How To Safely Remodel Or Remove Lead From Homes

Special care should be taken when trying to remodel or renovate a home with lead based paint or dust. Trying to remove the paint will cause more dust and create more of a hazard. Rather than trying to completely remove the lead risk, covering it up makes a safer environment. For example, if the outside of a house is chipping and flaking because the lead based paint is breaking down, consider siding the house rather than scrapping the paint off. Remodeling using drywall and paneling to cover up the lead-based paint prevents the paint from entering the air.

If renovations must be done, special care should be taken. First and foremost, children should be removed during the renovation until after all of the debris and dust is cleaned up. Hiring a contractor that is certified in lead abatement is expensive, but comfort can be taken in the fact that the job is done correctly. If this is not feasible, make sure any work done is in a moist environment. Blasting the paint of the side of the house causes more dust. If you moisten the paint before blasting it, less dust will be produced.

Cleaning Tips

- ◆ Do not vacuum, dry dust, or sweep in a room known to have lead dust, instead frequently use damp mopping to control dust.
- ◆ Pick up loose paint chips with duct tape
- ◆ Frequently wash your children's hands, face, and toys, especially before dinner
- ◆ Do not sand or scrape paint, it will cause dust
- ◆ Wipe surfaces, such as windowsills and floors, with paper towels, warm water and soap once a week, rinse well

- ◆ Use a high phosphate content cleaner. Liquid dishwashing soaps generally contain high phosphate amounts
- ◆ Let the water from the spout run for a couple of minutes before you get what you need. Never use hot water for cooking or drinking, it contains more lead.
- ◆ People that work with lead should shower, change clothes and shoes before they enter the house. Wash these clothes separately
- ◆ Plant grass and other plants in bare soil to reduce children's exposure to soil
- ◆ If you have to vacuum, use a vacuum with a HEPA filter. HEPA filter vacuums are found in most stores and are labeled as having a HEPA filter. The HEPA filter prevents dust and dirt from being pushed into the air.

Lead Testing

If you are concerned about your child being lead poisoned, make an appointment with your health care provider to get your child screened. If you do not have a health care provider, call 449-7514 and inquire about the availability of lead screening. Currently, lead screening is being conducted free of charge for children six years or younger at the Ft. Wayne-Allen County Department of Health on Fridays from 9:00 am-11:00 am and 1:00-4:00 pm. The biggest concern is getting your child tested quickly.

If you are concerned about your home containing lead hazards, you can hire a certified lead risk assessor from the list provided by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. Call 449-7125 for more information.