



Lead

Information Sheet

Scientific Background

People can get lead into their body if they:



- Breathe in lead dust (especially during renovations that disturb painted surfaces)
- Put their hands or other objects covered with lead dust into their mouths
- Eat paint chips or soil that contains lead.

Lead is more dangerous to children under the age of 6 – brains and nervous systems are more sensitive to the damaging effects of lead, bodies absorb more lead, and because they are more likely to put hands and objects in their mouths. Exposure to low levels of lead can severely harm children: nervous system, kidney damage, learning disabilities, speech, language and behavior problems, poor muscle coordination, hearing damage, etc.

In adults, lead can cause increased chance of illness during pregnancy, harm to fetus, fertility problems, high blood pressure, digestive and memory problems, and muscle or joint pain.

Reference: EPA 747-K-99-001 (www.epa.gov)

Discovery



Lead-based paint is usually not a hazard if it is in good condition, and not on an impact or friction surface, like a window. Most homes built before 1978 have lead-based paint.

Deteriorating lead-based paint (peeling, chipping, chalking, cracking or damaged) is a hazard and needs immediate attention. It may also be a hazard when found on surfaces that children can chew, or surfaces that get a lot of wear-and-tear. There can also be lead in dust, soil, water, toys and pottery.

Hire a certified testing professional who will use a range of reliable testing methods. Home test kits are not always accurate.

Reference: 1-800-424-LEAD (424-5323) www.epa.gov/lead

Fixing the Problem

Removal of the problem requires a certified lead abatement expert.



However, to limit the risk of exposure –

- clean up paint chips immediately
- clean floors, window frames, and other surfaces weekly;
- thoroughly rinse sponges and mop heads after cleaning;
- wash children's hands often;
- keep play areas clean;
- keep children from chewing painted surfaces;
- clean or remove shoes before entering your home to avoid tracking in lead from soil;
- and make sure children eat nutritious, low-fat meals high in iron and calcium.

Reference: 1-800-424-LEAD (424-5323) www.epa.gov/lead