

Childhood Lead Poisoning: A Heavy Subject



What is lead?

Lead is a heavy metal found in the earth's crust. It can combine with other chemicals to form lead compounds or salts. Lead is a natural element that does not break down in the environment and is very hard to clean up.

Does lead affect your health?

Lead can be harmful to anyone. But children under the age of six are at the greatest risk of being harmed. Their bodies easily absorb lead, which can be bad for their developing brains and other organs and systems. Certain childhood activities, such as chewing on or eating non-food items like paint chips or dirt can lead to lead poisoning. This could lead to very serious illnesses, such as:

- Speech, language, and behavioral problems
- Learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder (ADD)
- Mental retardation
- Possibly death

THERE IS NO SAFE LEVEL OF LEAD!

Your child should be screened for lead risk if:

- You live in or often visit a house or apartment that may have been built before 1978.
- Live in or often visit a house or apartment that is being remodeled or is having paint removed.

- Live near an active lead smelter, battery recycling plant, or other industry likely to release lead.
- You use home remedies such as greta, azarcon, or pay-loo-ah, or cosmetics with kohl in them.

Your child's primary care provider (PCP) should:

- Do a lead blood test on children 12 and 24 months of age.
- Screen children between the ages of 2 and 6.
- Ask you questions about your child's risk for lead poisoning at each visit from ages 3 to 6.

Questions?

- Talk to your child's PCP.
- Call the Personal Health Advisor line at 1-800-919-8807 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Call Customer Service at 1-866-231-1821 (TTY/TDD: 1-877-247-6272).



Choices for a Healthy Life

