



LEAD POISONING PREVENTION FACT SHEET

What is lead poisoning?

Lead poisoning happens when lead builds up in the body. This can take months or years. Even a small amount of lead can cause serious health problems. Young children are at the highest risk.

Sources of lead exposure

- **Lead-based paint:** Homes built before 1978 may have peeling or cracking paint that can create lead dust.
- **Contaminated soil:** Lead can be found in soil, near old homes, highways or industrial areas.
- **Drinking water:** Lead pipes, faucets and plumbing fixtures can leak lead into drinking water.
- **Household items:** Some toys, jewelry, makeup, spices, candy and pottery may contain lead.
- **Occupational exposure:** Work settings with lead can expose employees to lead dust hazards.

Health effects of lead poisoning

- **Children:** Lead can cause developmental delays, learning problems, being easily upset, weight loss, tiredness, stomach pain, vomiting, constipation, hearing loss, and seizures.
- **Adults:** Lead can cause high blood pressure, joint and muscle pain, difficulties with memory or concentration, headache, abdominal pain, mood disorders, reduced sperm count, and miscarriage or premature birth in pregnant women.

Prevention tips

- Test your home for lead if it was built before 1978.
- Keep your home clean and dust-free by using a wet rag to clean dust around windowsills.
- Use cold water for drinking and cooking. Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead.
- Wash toys to reduce lead dust.
- Be cautious of imported toys, jewelry, and pottery that may contain lead.
- Maintain a healthy diet that is high in calcium, iron, and vitamin C to reduce lead absorption.

Testing and treatment

Blood Lead Test: The only way to know if your child has been exposed to lead is through a blood test. Talk to your healthcare provider about testing. If your child has been exposed to lead, follow your healthcare provider's recommendations for treatment and reducing further exposure.

For more information

- **CCDPH Lead Poisoning Prevention and Healthy Homes Unit**
Contact us about how to prevent lead poisoning and make your home a healthy home:
 - Call - 312-515-0366
 - Email - vanessa.mendoza@cookcountyhealth.org
 - Website - www.cookcountypublichealth.org
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**
 - www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/communication-resources/know-the-facts.html

