

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Environmental Issues in Human Ecology

Cornell University
TXA, 239 Martha Van Rensselaer Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853-4401
Tel: 607 255-5588 Fax: 607 255-1093

Lead in Your Home

Lead is in many homes. Lead can hurt you and your children. This fact sheet will teach you about lead to help keep you and your children safer.

What is lead?

Lead is a metal that is in some paint, gas and water pipes. Lead can be in your home, soil and water. Lead is in most homes made before 1978. Sometimes, lead is in new homes too.

Why worry about lead?

Lead is bad when too much gets inside your body or your children's bodies. Most of the time, lead hurts children more than adults. It is not easy to know if you have too much lead in your body.

Too much lead in **your children** can:

- hurt your children's brains
- slow your children's growth
- cause hearing problems
- cause learning problems

Too much lead in **your body** can:

- hurt your unborn baby
- make your stomach and joints hurt
- make it hard to learn and remember
- cause high blood pressure



How does lead get in your body?

If your home has lead, it can be easy for lead to get in your or your children's bodies. Lead can get in your body if you:

- put your hands or other things with lead dust in your mouth
- eat paint chips or dirt that has lead
- breathe in lead dust
- drink water that goes through lead pipes

Does your home have lead?

Your home may have lead if it was made before 1978 and the paint is peeling, chipping, or cracking. Lead can be in your water pipes too. Sometimes, lead is in the dirt around your house. Paint from the windows or walls can get in the dirt. Also, some gas has lead in it. Gas can put lead in your dirt.

What is tested for lead?

If your children have high levels of lead in their blood, get the paint tested. Sometimes, the dirt and water need to be tested too.

If your home has a lead problem, have the problem fixed. Use a professional. If you rent, talk to your landlord. Sometimes, it is not easy to fix a home with a lead problem. **But, there are easy things you can do to help.**

What can you do?

- ✓ Tell your landlord about peeling or chipping paint
- ✓ Clean floors, window frames, window sills, and floors every week
- ✓ Clean up paint chips when you see them
- ✓ Rinse mops and sponges well after use
- ✓ Take off or clean your shoes before going inside
- ✓ Don't remove lead paint yourself
- ✓ Use cold water for cooking, baby food and drinking
- ✓ Let the water run for a couple minutes when it hasn't been used in more than four hours
- ✓ Don't grow vegetables or fruits in soil that has lead
- ✓ Plant grass
- ✓ Eat foods with calcium and iron like milk, yogurt, meats, fish, green veggies
- ✓ Know the results of your children's blood tests for lead
- ✓ Wash children's hands, bottles, pacifiers and toys often
- ✓ Keep play areas clean
- ✓ Don't let children chew painted areas like walls, window sills, old painted toys

Where can you get more information?

Blood tests

Contact your doctor or public health clinic.

General Questions and Help

Call Jeanne Darling of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County at (607) 865-6531. Or, visit the office on Route 10.

Information Centers

- Call 1-800-LEAD-FYI for information on lead and children.
- Call 1-800-424-LEAD for help.
- Call 1-800-426-4791 about lead in drinking water.

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Prepared by</i> Katie DiTella, Extension Associate, Cornell University <i>and</i> Ann Lemley, Professor, Cornell University</p>
