

CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING PREVENTION Fact Sheet

1. Lead is harmful to children.

Lead can damage a child's brain and nervous system. Lead poisoning is especially dangerous for children under the age of six because their rapidly growing and developing bodies absorb more lead. It can cause permanent learning and behavioral problems that make it difficult for children to succeed in school.

2. A blood lead test is the only way to know if a child has lead poisoning.

Most children with lead poisoning do not look or act sick.

Children at highest risk for lead poisoning are those in government assisted health programs and those who live or spend time in older housing. **Old housing may have deteriorating or disturbed lead-based paint and lead-contaminated soil and dust.**

Children at risk of lead poisoning should be tested at both one and two years of age. Additionally, children three to six years old, at risk, who were not tested at ages one and two years old, should have a blood lead test. Parents can talk to their child's doctor about getting tested for lead.

3. Most children get lead poisoned from ingesting deteriorating lead paint in homes built before 1978 or from ingesting soil containing lead from gasoline residue when the following occurs:

- Lead-based paint chips or peels;
- Lead-based paint is disturbed during repairs or renovations;
- Lead contaminates soil along roadways, near buildings, and homes;
- Lead dust from paint and soil accumulates in and around homes;
- Lead dust settles on bare soil around the home where children play; or
- Lead dust settles on toys, fingers, and other things children put in their mouths.

4. Other sources of childhood lead poisoning include:

- Handmade ceramic tableware, especially imported ceramics decorated with lead-based glaze or paint;
- Traditional home remedies including Azarcon, Greta, and Pay-loo-ah;
- Traditional cosmetics including Kohl and Surma;
- Some imported toys and jewelry
- Some imported candies and food products; and
- Work clothes, shoes, and workers exposed to lead on the job. A few of the jobs with exposure to lead are painting, construction, gardening, making or recycling batteries, and repairing radiators.

5. Good nutrition helps children's bodies resist lead poisoning.

- Serve three meals and two healthy snacks to children each day including:
- Calcium-rich foods (milk, cheese, yogurt, and tofu),
- Iron-rich foods (lean meats, beans, iron-fortified cereals and grains, dried fruit, and dark green vegetables), and
- Vitamin C rich foods (fresh, canned, or frozen fruits and WIC fruit juices).

6. Parents and caregivers can also prevent childhood lead poisoning by:

- Wiping clean or taking off shoes before entering the home
- Washing children's hands and toys often
- If lead based paint is on any surface inside or outside of the home.
 - Wet mop and wash surfaces often;
 - When painting or remodeling, always follow "lead-safe" work practices:
 - Use plastic sheeting on the ground and furniture while working;
 - Wet surfaces before sanding and scraping;
 - Wet mop the area with an all-purpose cleaner at the end of the day.

7. Don't take lead home from your job.

- Change into clean clothes and shoes before getting into your car or going home. Bag dirty clothes and shoes.
- Wash your face and hands with soap and water before leaving work.
- Take a shower and wash your hair as soon as you get home. It is better to shower at work if you can.
- Wash work clothes separately from all other clothes. Run the empty washing machine again after the work clothes to rinse the lead out.

8. Free blood lead testing is available for most children.

Children who receive services from Medi-Cal, Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP), or Healthy Families are eligible for free testing. Private health insurance plans also usually pay for the test.

To find out about eligibility for Medi-Cal and Healthy Families, call: 1(800) 880-5305.

9. The Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at the local health department can provide more information.

**Los Angeles County
Department of Public Health
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
1-800-LA-4-LEAD
1-800-524-5323**