

Lead Poisoning Prevention: What Every Parent Should Know!

Who can get lead poisoning?

- *Children from 6 months to 6 years old are the main victims of lead poisoning. But anyone who eats, drinks, or breathes something which has too much lead can get lead poisoning.*
- *Lead tends to build up in the body over time. So someone who takes in only small amounts of lead can gradually develop lead poisoning.*
- *A pregnant woman should also know that lead carried in her blood can pass to her unborn child.*

How does lead affect health?

LEAD POISONING IS USUALLY A SILENT DISEASE.

- *A child who consumes a dangerous amount of lead may seem to be well. But lead can affect the brain, causing learning disabilities and behavior problems. Lead can also affect the blood, kidneys, and other parts of the body.*
- *As lead poisoning becomes serious, some children have stomach aches, loss of appetite, or loss of interest in play. Some children may also become overly active or fussy and irritable.*
- *A blood lead test can help find out if someone has taken in too much lead--before there are any outward signs of illness. Ask your doctor or clinic about this test.*



What causes lead poisoning?

- *Lead-based house paint was used in most homes before 1950. Lead was still used in some house paints until 1978. Paint on your window frames and on porches is very likely to present a risk for children.*
- *Small children put things in their mouths. They chew on window sills, they eat paint chips, and they suck on their hands. Lead from crumbling paint gets into household dust, and anything that gets dusty (like toys, pets, and fingers) can then become a source of lead poisoning.*
- *Old furniture (cribs, play pens, chairs, etc.) and painted toys may have lead.*
- *Old or imported ceramic dishes may be decorated with lead glazes. Food that comes in contact with a lead glaze will pick up some of the lead.*
- *Many children will eat almost anything. Dirt, including soil from flower pots, plaster, ashes, and charcoal all may have lead.*

For more information about lead poisoning, contact your local health department or Maryland Department of the Environment at (410) 631-3859, or www.mde.state.md.us

