

## *It's Lead Poisoning Prevention Week!*

By

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National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week is October 19 to 25, 2008. The national campaign logo is, "Let's Wipe Out Lead Poisoning. Renovate Right!" The most vulnerable to this hazard are our children. Research has shown that lead poisoning is entirely preventable. The key is stopping children from coming into contact with lead and treating children who have been poisoned by lead.

The goal is to prevent lead exposure to children *before* they are harmed. There are many ways parents can reduce a child's exposure to lead. The key is stopping children from coming into contact with lead. Lead hazards in a child's environment must be identified and controlled or removed safely.

Lead-based paint is the major source of exposure for lead in U.S. children. All houses built before 1978 are likely to contain some lead-based paint. However, it is the deterioration of this paint that causes a problem. You should determine the construction year of the house or the dwelling where the child may spend a large amount of time (e.g., grandparents or daycare). In housing built before 1978, assume that the paint has lead unless tests show otherwise.

Here are some suggestions for reducing the harmful environmental effects of lead:

- **Talk to your state or local health department about testing paint and dust from your home for lead.**
- **Make sure your child does not have access to peeling paint or chewable surfaces painted with lead-based paint.**
- **Pregnant women and children should not be present in housing built before 1978 that is undergoing renovation.** They should not participate in activities that disturb old paint or in cleaning up paint debris after work is completed.
- **Create barriers between living/play areas and lead sources.** Until environmental clean-up is completed, parents should clean and isolate all sources of lead. They should close and lock doors to keep children away from chipping or peeling paint on walls. You can also apply temporary barriers such as contact paper or duct tape, to cover holes in walls or to block children's access to other sources of lead.

- **Regularly wash children's hands and toys.** Hands and toys can become contaminated from household dust or exterior soil. Both are known lead sources.
- **Regularly wet-mop floors and wet-wipe window components.** Because household dust is a major source of lead, parents should wet-mop floors and wet-wipe horizontal surfaces every 2-3 weeks. Windowsills and wells can contain high levels of leaded dust. They should be kept clean. If feasible, windows should be shut to prevent abrasion of painted surfaces or opened from the top sash.
- **Prevent children from playing in bare soil; if possible, provide them with sandboxes.** Parents should plant grass on areas of bare soil or cover the soil with grass seed, mulch, or wood chips, if possible. Until the bare soil is covered, parents should move play areas away from bare soil and away from the sides of the house. If using a sandbox, parents should also cover the box when not in use to prevent cats from using it as a litter box. That will help protect children from exposure to animal waste.

**To further reduce a child's exposure from non-residential paint sources:**

- Avoid using traditional home remedies and cosmetics that may contain lead.
- Avoid eating candies imported from Mexico.
- Avoid using containers, cookware, or tableware to store or cook foods or liquids that are not shown to be lead free.
- Remove recalled toys and toy jewelry immediately from children. Check Lead Recall lists.
- Use only cold water from the tap for drinking, cooking, and for making baby formula. (Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead. Most of the lead in household water usually comes from the plumbing in your house, not from the local water supply.)
- Shower and change clothes after finishing a task that involves working with lead-based products such as stained glass work, bullet making, or using a firing range.

For more information on childhood lead poisoning, contact your local health department or the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-5323 (LEAD). These websites will also offer more information about lead poisoning: [www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov); [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov); and [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov). Information source for this article was [www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/).