

CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING PREVENTION

1. Lead is harmful to children.

Lead can damage a child's brain and nervous system. Lead exposure is especially dangerous for children under the age of six because their rapidly growing and developing bodies absorb more lead. It can cause learning 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 exposure are those who live or spend time in older housing. **Old housing may have deteriorated or disturbed lead-based paint, lead-contaminated soil and dust.**

Children at risk of lead exposure should be tested at both one and two years of age. Additionally, at-risk children three to six years old, 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. Free blood lead testing is available for most children.

Children who receive services from Medi-Cal or Women, Infants and Children (WIC) are eligible for free testing. Private health insurance plans will also pay for the test. To find out about eligibility for Medi-Cal, call: 1(800) 880-5305.

4. Childhood lead poisoning from deteriorating lead paint in homes built before 1978 or contamination from the past use of leaded gas occurs when:

- 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
- Lead dust settles on toys, fingers and other things children put in their mouths

5. Other sources of childhood lead poisoning include:

- Work clothes, shoes or workers exposed to lead on the job
- A few of the jobs with exposure to lead are lead smelting, making or recycling batteries, repairing radiators and remodeling older homes
- Handmade ceramic tableware, especially imported ceramics decorated with lead-based glaze or paint
- Some toys, jewelry and other painted objects
- Traditional home remedies, including Azarcon, Greta, Pay-loo-ah and other imported remedies
- Traditional cosmetics, including Surma and Sindoor
- Some imported spices, candies and other food products

- Water stored in a water crock or running through plumbing that contains lead

6. Eating healthy foods can help keep children safe from lead.

Serve children healthy meals and snacks at least every 3-4 hours.

- It's important to feed children a well-rounded diet with food from each food group when possible. To help prevent lead exposure, focus on including calcium, iron and vitamin C into meals and snacks such as:
 - Protein, such as lean meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, beans, peas and unsalted nuts and seeds
 - Vegetables, in a variety of colors like dark green, red, orange, yellow and purple
 - Fruits, like fresh, frozen or canned fruits without added sugar
 - Whole grains, like whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, quinoa and brown rice
 - Dairy products, such as milk or yogurt without added sugar

Limit foods with:

- Added sugar, like candy, soda, sugary breakfast cereal, sweet treats and granola bars
- Added fat, like fried foods, fast foods, chips, pork rinds and other processed foods

7. 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

8. When painting or remodeling, always follow "lead-safe" work practices or hire a renovation contractor if possible.

- If you do plan to do the work yourself; **you must control the poisoning threat from lead dust.** Contact the National Lead Information Center for a free guidebook or visit the [Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch's web page](#) to learn about the following:
 - Containing the work area so no lead dust escapes
 - Protecting yourself, family and pets from any lead dust that will be created
 - Releasing as little lead dust as possible into the work area
 - Cleaning the lead dust and work area daily

9. 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

10. When searching for health information online, ensure that the source is reliable.

- Look at the website address to identify the owner of the site. This can be an agency or organization such as .gov (government agency) or .edu (an educational institution, such as a school, college or university).
- According to the [NIH National Institute on Aging](#), additional questions to take into consideration when seeking health information online include:
 - What is the purpose of the website and who owns or sponsors it?
 - Who wrote the information? Who reviewed it?
 - When was the information written and updated?
 - Is your privacy protected? Does the website clearly state a privacy policy?
 - How can I protect my health information?
 - Does the website offer quick and easy solutions to your health problems? Does it promise miracle cures?
- Use the helpful hints listed above with health and medical apps as well as with social media, various health news sites and health books.

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

Sonoma County Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Public Health Division, Health Services
Program Office [\(800\) 427-8982](tel:8004278982)
Lead Assessor/Inspector and for Lead Tips & Complaints [\(707\) 565-6565](tel:7075656565)
<https://sonomacounty.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services/divisions/public-health/childhood-lead-poisoning-prevention>