



# Look Out for Lead

*Do you know that lead poisoning poses a serious risk to your child's health?*

Lead is a toxic substance that may be present in dust, paint, soil, and drinking water. When ingested or inhaled as dust, lead poses a serious health risk to young children. Low levels of lead exposure can cause nervous system and kidney damage, learning disabilities, poor muscle coordination, slower growth, hearing losses, and also speech, language and behavior problems. While low-level exposure is most common, exposure to high levels can have devastating effects including seizures, unconsciousness, and even death.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 1 in 11 American children has high levels of lead in their blood.

**2001 Wisconsin Statistics** Of 79,465 children screened ages 0–6 years, there were 5,776 (7.2%) who had a lead level greater than 10 (considered an elevation).

**2001 Sheboygan County Statistics** Of 1,388 children screened ages 0–6 years, there were 124 children (8.9%) who had a lead level greater than 10 (considered an elevation).

*What are the common sources of lead?*

Lead is still prevalent in housing built before 1978, and poses risks in the form of lead based-paint, lead-contaminated dust, lead-contaminated soil, and older plumbing fixtures made with lead. Before we knew how harmful lead could be, it was used in paint, gasoline, water pipes, and many other products. Now we know the dangers of lead poisoning and have banned or limited the use of lead in these products. However, this has not eliminated the risk.

*When are these sources hazardous?*

Lead-based paint is a hazard if it's peeling, chipping, chalking, or cracking. Even lead-based paint that appears to be undisturbed can be a problem if it covers surfaces that children may chew or that get a lot of wear and tear such as windows, windowsills, doors, stairs, railings, banisters, porches, and fences.

Dust can become contaminated with lead when lead-based paint is dry-scraped or sanded. Dust can also become contaminated when older painted surfaces bump or rub together. Lead chips and dust can gather on surfaces and objects that people touch or those children put into their mouths.

Soil can become contaminated by flaking or peeling lead-based paint on older buildings. Soil near roadways may also be contaminated by past use of leaded gasoline in cars. Avoid these areas when planting vegetable gardens.


Lead can leach into the water at any temperature, but the amount of lead can be much greater when the water is hot or warm. Don't drink or cook with water from the "hot" faucet if you live in an older home or think you have lead plumbing fixtures.

Sheboygan City Development, in partnership with Public Health Nursing, inspects properties when elevated blood levels in children 6 years and younger exist.

## Follow these steps to protect your children's health.



Get your child tested if you live in a home built before 1978. This can be done at your physician's office or by appointment at Sheboygan County Public Health at 459-4382. Special screenings are also held throughout the year. Check the web site or call Public Health for further information. Children who have high blood levels of lead may appear healthy.

When you open windows, clean out all loose paint chips, dust, and debris. Don't use your vacuum, as this will only spread lead dust around the house. Only a vacuum with a Hepafilter should be used and can be borrowed **FREE** from Public Health. Clean your windowsills and woodwork with hot, soapy  water and clean rinse.

Use paper towels or rags (that you wash separately from the rest of your laundry) to do this cleaning.

Avoid exposure to harmful lead dust. Hire a professional to remove lead-based paint, or when renovating or remodeling – don't do it yourself.


Use cold tap water for drinking or cooking since lead is more likely to leach into warm or hot water. Run tapwater for 15-30 seconds (or until it feels much colder on your hand) before drinking it.



Clean or remove shoes before entering your home to avoid tracking in lead-contaminated soil.



Make sure children wash their hands after playing outside and before eating or going to bed. Have children play in grassy areas instead of bare soil.

Keep play area clean. Wash bottles, pacifiers, toys, and stuffed animals regularly. Keep your home  clean by washing floors and windowsills weekly.

Keep children from chewing on painted surfaces, such as windowsills, cribs, or playpens or from playing near painted surfaces that rub together.



Make sure your family eats a well-balanced diet low in fat and high in calcium and iron to reduce absorption of lead into the body.

If you rent property, tell your landlord about peeling or chipping paint.

For more information about preventing lead poisoning, call the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-LEAD or visit [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead)

## **Other website resources:**

U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) [www.hud.gov/offices/lead](http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead)  
HUD Search Tools [www.hud.gov/assist/search.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/assist/search.cfm)

Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning (The Coalition) <http://www.lead-safe.org/>

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/lead.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/lead.htm)