

Protect Your Pregnancy



If your home or workplace was built before 1978, you should learn more about protecting yourself and your baby from the dangers of lead.

FACT 1: Protecting yourself and your baby may be as simple as testing your home.

FACT 2: Prevention begins with a healthy diet rich in calcium, iron, zinc and vitamin C.

FACT 3: Stay away from folk medicines like Greta or Azarcon or cosmetics like Kohl and Surma, which are known to contain lead.

How can you be exposed

Women at greatest risk are those who might be exposed to lead in the workplace, women engaged in specific crafts and women living in homes built before 1978 with crumbling or peeling lead-based paint.

Lead is all around us

- Paint and dust in older homes, especially dust from renovation or repairs
- Soil and tap water
- Candy, makeup, glazed pots and folk medicine
- Work like auto refinishing, construction and plumbing

How lead affects pregnancy

Too much lead in your body can:

- Put you at risk for miscarriage
- Cause your baby to be born too early or too small
- Hurt your baby's brain, kidneys and nervous system
- Cause your child to have learning or behavior problems

The best thing that you can do to put your mind at ease is to speak with your doctor.

Children are at risk

- Children ages six and younger are especially at risk, partly because their brains and nervous systems are still developing. At this age, toys and fingers often end up in their mouths.

Start good habits early:

- Wash your children's hands before they eat, before they nap, when they come in from playing outside and at bedtime.
- Wash your children's bottles, pacifiers and toys - often.
- Wipe the soil off of your family's shoes before they enter the house. Keep shoes at the door.
- Feed your children healthy, calcium-rich, low-fat foods.
- Check areas where your child will live, learn and play for lead hazards.

What to look for in your home

Lead-based paint is generally not a hazard if the painted surface is in good condition.

Lead-based paint is dangerous if the painted surface is peeling, chipping, chalking or cracking. Paint chips and dust from lead-based paint can get on surfaces that children touch or crawl on. Just by placing their hands in their mouths, children can be exposed to the hazards of lead poisoning. It only takes a very small amount of lead-based paint dust to poison a child.

In an older home, common areas to check are:

- Windows and windowsills
- Doors and door frames
- Stairs, railings and banisters
- Floors, because some varnishes are known to contain lead

Dust containing lead can be created when painted surfaces rub together, such as when windows, doors or drawers are opened and closed, or by walking on stair treads.

- Check for dust buildup around hinges, window frames and drawers.

Lead dust can also be tracked into the home from soil outside.

- Check porches and fences for deteriorating paint that may be lead-based.

Painted toys and furniture

- Painted toys and furniture made before 1978 may be painted with lead-based paint. Do not let children chew on any cribs, playpens or older painted toys.
- Consider the condition of any furniture you may be refinishing for your children's rooms. More recently, imported toys have been recalled because of high levels of lead.

How to prepare the nursery

- Check the windows, walls, baseboards and doors in the nursery for any signs of cracked or peeling paint. If you live in an older home and plan to paint or remodel your baby's nursery, hire an EPA lead-safe certified renovator or learn how [to do the job properly yourself](#).
- Avoid any baby furniture that a previous owner has painted over, as chipping could easily occur.
- Don't place the crib by the window. A child's hands can get on dusty windowsills or wind could blow dust into the crib.
- Wash your children's bottles, pacifiers, blankets and toys frequently. These items often end up on the floor where they can collect dust.

A checklist for expectant moms

Have your home tested

Most lead exposure comes from paint in older homes. When old paint cracks and peels, it creates dangerous dust. Just a tiny amount of lead dust is enough to harm a child. The best way to know if you have a lead hazard is to have your home tested by a certified lead inspector or risk assessor .

Take care if you are renovating

Home repairs like sanding or scraping paint can create dangerous dust. Be sure to hire a contractor who is certified by EPA or your state, and trained in lead-safe work practices. If someone in your family is doing repairs, be sure to see the guidelines for do-it-yourselfers. If you can, consider moving to another location temporarily while work is being done.

If you have old lead paint in your home, make sure it is well maintained and painted over with new paint, and take steps to keep the area clean and dust-free.

Talk to your doctor

Talk to your doctor about any medicines or vitamins you are taking. Some folk remedies and dietary supplements may have lead in them. It is also important to tell your doctor about any unusual symptoms you may have, such as the craving to eat dirt or clay, because they may contain lead.

Avoid certain jobs or hobbies

If any of your family members work in construction or home renovation/repair in older homes, battery manufacturing or recycling, mining/smelting or refinishing old furniture, have them change into clean clothing before coming home.

Some hobbies that use lead include hunting, fishing, stained glass making, working on stock cars and making pottery. Keep work shoes outside and wash all work clothes separately from the rest of the family's clothes. Keep hobby materials away from the living areas.

Eat foods with calcium, iron and vitamin C

Calcium is in milk, yogurt, cheese and green leafy vegetables like spinach.

Iron is in lean red meat, beans, cereals and spinach.

Vitamin C is in oranges, green and red peppers, broccoli, tomatoes and juices.

Avoid folk remedies and cosmetics

Greta and Azarcon, for example, are two remedies used to treat an upset stomach. Both contain lead. Common cosmetics like Kohl and Surma are also known to contain lead.

Avoid other household items that may contain lead

Some dishes may contain lead. It is important to store and serve your food properly. Do not use dishes that are chipped or cracked.

Avoid using imported lead-glazed ceramic pottery.

Avoid using pewter or brass containers or utensils to cook, serve or store food.

Avoid using leaded crystal to serve or store beverages.

http://www.leadfreekids.org/my_pregnancy/index.php