

Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home

Information for communities near waste sites with possible lead contamination

Knowing the possible sources of lead in your home makes it easier to manage and avoid exposures. Children are especially sensitive to lead. Knowing where your children play might help you protect them from exposure. Your home might look clean, but still might have lead inside. Children playing on the floor can swallow or breathe in dust and dirt that might contain lead. Exposure to lead can seriously harm children's health, even though they might not look or act sick.

Identify possible sources of lead

- **Lead-based paint in older homes, especially those built before 1978:** Paint on the inside or outside of a home or on furniture can chip, flake, and be ground into tiny bits (dust). Children can swallow or breathe in these paint pieces.
- **Soil and dust that contain lead:** Environmental sources of lead from urban or industrial areas, roads, former mining sites, smelting operations (current or past), or hazardous waste sites can be carried into your house on shoes, clothes, and pets. Children can swallow or breathe in this soil and dust.
- **Drinking water:** Lead can be in drinking water from a building's pipes, faucets, solder (especially in buildings built before 1985), lead service lines, or private wells.
- **Imported lead-glazed pottery, foreign candy, and jewelry:** These items from other countries can contain lead that could be harmful if swallowed.
- **Products recalled for lead contamination:** Some products, including toys, have been recalled because they are contaminated with lead. Visit [recalls.gov](https://www.recalls.gov) to search for products that have been recalled.



Protect your family by following these simple steps

- **Assess for possible lead contamination**
 - If you live in a home built before 1978, get the paint tested for lead.
 - Get the dust in your home and your drinking water tested for lead.
 - Talk to your local health department if you need help finding resources for testing dust, drinking water, or paint for lead.
- **Keep your child's hands and toys clean**
 - Wash your child's hands after outside play and before meals, naps, and bedtime.
 - Wash your child's toys, bottles, and pacifiers often.
 - Teach your child not to put dirty hands and toys in their mouth.



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- **Be “lead safe”**

- If your home was built before 1978, repair and remodel safely.
 - Before you paint, repair, or renovate, take “lead-safe” worker training to learn how to lower the amount of lead dust made while work is being done.
 - Hire a certified professional trained in lead-safe work practices.
- If you or a family member work or do hobbies that involve lead, change clothing, remove shoes, and shower immediately when you come home or, if working or doing hobbies at home, take similar precautions

- **Clean your house often to remove lead tracked into the house from outside sources**

- Clean your home weekly to keep it as dust free as possible.
- Clean floors, windowsills, doorframes, and baseboards with soap and water.
- Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter to trap lead dust. Vacuums without a HEPA filter can put more lead into the air.

- **Use washable rugs at all doors going into the house**

- Take shoes off at the door or make sure everyone wipes their feet before entering the house.
- Wash doormats, rugs, and cleaning rags often; be sure to wash them separately from clothing.

- **Eat healthy foods to reduce the risk for lead exposure and drink plenty of clean water**

- Eat iron-rich foods
 - Lean red meats, fish, chicken, shellfish, and organ meats (e.g., liver)
 - Cereals high in iron and seeds (pumpkin seeds, quinoa)
 - Dried fruits, such as raisins or prunes
 - Spinach and legumes
- Eat vitamin C-rich foods
 - Strawberries, kiwifruit, oranges, orange juice, grapefruits, grapefruit juice, and black currants
 - Tomatoes and tomato juice
 - Green peppers, broccoli, brussels sprouts, snow peas, and kale
- Eat calcium-rich foods
 - Milk, yogurt, cheese, and other dairy products
 - Green leafy vegetables (spinach, kale, collard greens, etc.)
 - Legumes (beans, lentils, edamame, chickpeas, etc.)
 - Sardines, salmon, etc.
- Some studies suggest that avoiding high fat foods such as french fries, hot dogs, and potato chips might help your body absorb less lead.
- Use only cold tap water for drinking, cooking, and for making baby formula. Hot water from the faucet is more likely to contain lead. Run cold water 30 to 60 seconds before using to flush out impurities that might have leached from plumbing materials. Have your drinking water tested for lead.

LINKS TO OTHER RESOURCES:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Handbook: Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home (<https://www.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-lead-your-home-english>)
- EPA website: Protect Your Family from Sources of Lead (<https://www.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-sources-lead>)
- CDC's National Center for Environmental Health website: Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/>)
- CDC's resource for lead in drinking water: www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/sources/water.htm

[epa.gov/lead](https://www.epa.gov/lead)

This fact sheet is provided by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry—Region 5. If you have questions about lead exposure, contact your local health agency, Illinois Department of Public Health, Brian T. Koch, brian.koch@illinois.gov, 217-785-3176, or call or email, Motria Caudill, with Region 5, ATSDR Chicago, 312-886-0267, ldu1@cdc.gov.