

Lead Based Paint

Many houses and apartments built before 1978 have paint that contains lead (called lead based paint). Lead from paint chips and dust can pose serious health hazards if not taken care of properly.

The Residential Lead Based Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 (42 U.S.C. 48521) went into effect in 1996. This law requires that individuals receive certain information before renting, buying or renovating pre-1978 housing.

Every Purchaser of any interest in residential real estate on which a residential dwelling was built prior to 1978 is notified that such property may present exposure to lead from lead based paint that may place young children at risk of developing lead poisoning. Lead poisoning in young children may produce permanent neurological damage, including learning disabilities, reduced intelligence quotient, behavioral problems, and impaired memory. Lead poisoning also poses a particular risk to pregnant women. The seller of any interest in residential property is required to provide the Buyer with any information on lead based paint hazards from risk assessment or inspections in the Seller's possession and notify the Buyer of any known lead based paint hazards. A risk assessment or inspection for possible lead based paint hazards is recommended prior to purchase.

CHECKING YOUR HOME FOR LEAD

You can get your home checked for lead hazards in one or two ways, or both.

- A paint inspection tells you the lead content of every painted surface in your home. It will not tell you whether the paint is a hazard or how you should deal with it.
- A risk assessment tells you if there are any sources of serious lead exposure (such as peeling paint and lead dust). It also tells you what actions to take to address these hazards.

Have qualified professionals do the work. Trained professionals use a range of methods when checking your home including:

- Visual inspection of paint condition and location.
- Lab tests of paint samples.
- Surface dust tests.
- A portable x-ray fluorescence machine.

Home test kits for lead are available, but the federal government is still testing their reliability. These tests should not be the only method used before doing renovations or to assure safety.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY

If you suspect that your house has lead hazards, you can take some immediate steps to reduce your family's risk.

- If you rent, notify your landlord of peeling or chipping paint.
- Clean up paint chips immediately.
- Clean floors, window frames, windowsills, or other surfaces weekly. *(Use a mop or sponge with warm water and general all purpose cleaner or a cleaner made specifically for lead. Remember: Never mix ammonia and bleach products together since they can form a dangerous gas).*
- Thoroughly rinse sponges and mop heads after cleaning dirty or dusty areas.
- Wash children's hands often, especially before they eat and before nap time and bedtime.
- Keep play area clean. Wash bottles, pacifiers, toys, and stuffed animals regularly.
- Keep children from chewing windowsills or other painted surfaces.
- Clean or remove shoes before entering your home to avoid tracking in lead from soil.
- Make sure children eat nutritious, low-fat meals high in iron and calcium, such as spinach and low-fat dairy products. Children with good diets absorb less lead.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The National Lead Information Center

Call 1-800-LEAD-FYI to learn how to protect children from lead poisoning.

For other information on lead hazards, call the center's clearing house at 1-800-424-LEAD.

Hearing impaired call TDD 1-800526-5456

Fax 202-659-1192