

Lead 101 For Parents & Caregivers



WHAT IS LEAD, AND WHY IS LEAD DANGEROUS?

- Lead is a highly toxic metal that is found in the environment.
- **Lead is particularly dangerous for young children.** This is because they are still growing and developing. It is also dangerous for pregnant women. If a pregnant woman is exposed to lead it can harm the unborn child.
- Lead poisoning in children can lead to **lower intelligence quotient (IQ), hyperactivity (ADHD) and developmental, attention, and learning problems.**
- High blood lead levels can cause headaches, irritability, hearing loss, and abdominal pain.

HOW ARE CHILDREN EXPOSED TO LEAD?

Paint

Flaking and peeling paint in homes built before 1978

Soil

Lead gasoline and paint from older homes can settle in the soil

Water

Lead may be in water in older homes where the pipes, fixtures, or solder may contain lead

Consumer Products

Some toys, jewelry, imported spices, cosmetics, medicines, and old vinyl blinds, may include lead

There is **NO** safe blood lead level: Ask your doctor to test your child for lead in their blood at 12 months and 24 months.

HOW CAN I PREVENT MY CHILD FROM BEING EXPOSED TO LEAD?

- Wet-wipe and wet-mop windowsills and around home entrances.
- Wash children's hands and toys regularly.
- Do not let children play in bare soil. If they do, immediately wash their hands and clothes.
- Run water for 60 seconds before use and cook with cold water only.
- Cook nutrient dense meals, high in calcium, iron, and vitamin C.
- Use lead safe practices when doing home renovations.

Adults who have jobs or hobbies that may expose them to lead should:

- Take off their shoes before entering the house.
- Immediately wash their hands and change their clothes after coming home.

The only sure way to determine if your child has been exposed to lead is with a blood lead test.

If your child has low levels of lead in their blood (**below 10 µg/dL**):

- Learn about potential sources of lead exposure.
- Remove sources of lead.
- Implement lead-safe practices in your household.
- Talk to your doctor about when to have your child's blood tested again.
- Feed your family nutritious foods.
- Have the other children in the home under the age of 6 tested.

If your child has high levels of lead in their blood (**10 µg/dL or higher**):

- A case manager from your local health department will work with you on the next steps.
- Visit the Lead Safe Virginia website to read more about the guidelines for high blood lead levels.
(www.vdh.virginia.gov/leadsafe/)