

# Lead Poisoning Prevention FAQs

The only sure way to find out if your child has been exposed to lead is with a blood lead test. Ask your doctor to test your children at 12 and 24 months.



## What is lead?

Lead is a **highly toxic metal** that occurs naturally in the environment. It has been used for many years in products that are found in and around our homes, especially lead-based paint.

## Who does lead harm?

Lead is harmful to everyone, but **it is most dangerous for young children**. This is because they are still growing and developing and their body absorbs more of the lead they inhale or ingest. **It is also dangerous for pregnant women**. If a pregnant woman is exposed to lead it can hurt the unborn child.

## How is lead dangerous?

**In children**, lead can cause developmental delays, damage to the brain and nervous system, and hearing and speech problems. It also can cause a lower intelligence quotient (IQ) and attention deficient hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). **In adults**, high levels of lead can cause fatigue, memory loss, aches and pains, irritability, and nausea.

## How are we exposed to lead?

The main source of lead exposure for children is chipping and peeling **lead-based paint** (used in homes built before 1978). Other exposure sources include **soil, drinking water, imported/antique toys, traditional remedies and cosmetics, and ceramics**.

**Adults can be exposed through lead-related hobbies or jobs**, like construction, battery recycling, metalwork, and at firing ranges.

## How can I reduce the risks of being exposed to lead?

- **Wet-wipe and wet-mop** around windowsills and home entrances and **wash hands** frequently.
- Prevent children from playing in bare soil. If they do, immediately wash their hands and clothes.
- **Run tap water for 60 seconds** before cooking with it, and **cook nutrient dense meals** high in iron, calcium, and vitamin C.
- Adults with jobs or hobbies that may expose them to lead should **remove shoes** before entering the home and **immediately change clothes and wash hands** before interacting with their kids.



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