

Health Bulletin:

Prevent Childhood Lead Poisoning



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#21 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers

Make your home safe and healthy.

- Lead poisoning is serious, especially for young children. Children with lead poisoning may develop health, learning, and behavior problems. Even low blood lead levels may cause problems.
- There are laws to protect children from lead poisoning. Landlords are required to inspect and correct lead hazards in apartments where children under age 7 live, if the building was built before 1960 and has 3 or more units.
- Doctors are required to test all children for lead poisoning at both age 1 and age 2.

Peeling lead paint turns into poisonous dust.

Guess where it ends up?



What Causes Childhood Lead Poisoning?

Dust from peeling lead paint is the most common cause:

- Children living in housing built before 1960 are at highest risk.
- Many older buildings may have lead paint on walls, windows, doors, and other surfaces.
 - If paint is peeling or damaged, lead dust and paint chips can spread around the home.
 - Doors and windows that stick or rub together can create lead dust.
 - Home renovations done without safety precautions can also create lead dust.
 - Lead paint in good condition is not an immediate problem.
- Young children crawl and play on the floor. They are at special risk for swallowing lead dust when they put hands or toys in their mouths.

Other sources of lead:

- Items imported from countries where lead is not regulated, such as:
 - Pottery.
 - Food (including candy) and spices.
 - Cosmetics.
 - Traditional medicines.
- "Take-home" lead from jobs or hobbies, such as construction and building renovation work, stained-glass crafts, metal working, bridge maintenance, electronics, and auto repair.
- Soil in outdoor play areas that may be contaminated with lead.
- Tap water in buildings with old lead plumbing.

Available in Spanish and Chinese: call 311 or visit nyc.gov/health
Disponible en español: llame al 311 o visite nyc.gov/health
需要中文服務 - 可電 311 或造訪網址 nyc.gov/health



Keep Your Home Safe From Lead Hazards

Routine building maintenance and repair by landlords is important to prevent lead hazards.

- Landlords must inspect and repair lead hazards in apartments where children under age 7 live – at no cost to tenants – if the building was built before 1960 and has 3 or more units.
 - Fill out the form your landlord sends you each year asking if a child under 7 lives with you.
 - If you have a new baby or if a child under 7 comes to live with you, tell your landlord *in writing*.
- Lead hazards must be corrected *before* you move into a rented house or apartment, no matter how many units it has.
- If you own your own house, co-op, or condo, *you* are responsible for correcting lead hazards and doing home repairs safely. Call 311 for information.

Other important things you can do:

- Keep children away from peeling or damaged paint, and from home repairs or renovations. Call 311 for information on how you can make sure this work is done safely.
- Make sure there is no peeling or damaged paint where children regularly visit, such as day-care centers, preschools, or homes of relatives or baby sitters. Call 311 to report peeling paint in a day-care center or school.
- Clean floors, windowsills, and dusty places often with a wet mop or wet cloth.
- Wash toys, pacifiers, bottles, and other objects that children put in their mouths.
- Wash children's hands often with soap, especially before they eat and before they go to sleep.
- Use *cold* tap water (not hot) for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula. Let it run for a couple of minutes (until cold to the touch) before using it.
- Do not use imported items that may contain lead.
- Keep children away from work clothes and tools of anyone who does home repairs or other work that uses lead.

Make Sure Your Child Gets a Blood Lead Test

Talk to your child's doctor about blood lead testing.

- Doctors are required to test all children for lead poisoning at both age 1 and age 2. Older children should also be tested if they have been exposed to peeling paint or other lead sources.
- Blood lead tests are covered by Medicaid and most health plans. If you do not have health insurance, call 311 about free testing.

Are Pregnant Women and Newborns At Risk?

Pregnant women with lead poisoning can expose their unborn babies.

- If you're pregnant, don't eat food or use items that may contain lead.
- Make sure home repairs and renovations are done safely.
- Talk to your doctor about lead poisoning, and get tested if you think you've been exposed.

More Information

- New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: nyc.gov/html/doh/html/lead/lead.html or call 311
- New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development: nyc.gov/hpd or call 311
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/health/lead.htm
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: www.hud.gov/lead
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/lead or call 1-800-424-LEAD (1-800-424-5323)
- National Center for Healthy Housing: www.centerforhealthyhousing.org

311 for Non-Emergency NYC Services
Interpretation Available in 170 Languages

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Health & Mental Hygiene News

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