

What is lead?

Lead is a metal found in the earth, and it is a poison. For years, lead was used in paint, gasoline, plumbing and many other items. Lead can still be found in some products sold today. As these things are used or get worn out, the lead they contain can spread. Lead paint was banned from home use in 1978. If you live in a home built before 1978, or near a busy road, there could be lead in your house dust and soil.

What is lead poisoning?

A child can get lead poisoning by swallowing or breathing in lead. Often, lead poisoning is caused by lead you can't even see. Dust from lead paint is still the number one source of childhood lead poisoning.

Lead poisoning can cause problems with a child's growth, behavior, and ability to learn. Lead can also harm babies before they're born. If you're planning to have a baby, it's important to protect yourself from lead now.

Why are young children at greatest risk?

Young children spend a lot of time on the floor. They like to put hands, toys, and other things in their mouths. This raises their chances of swallowing lead dust and paint chips. Only a tiny amount of lead is needed to harm a young, growing child.

What can I do to protect my child from lead?

- **Wash away lead dust**

Wash away lead dust, if you live in a home built before 1978.

- **Wash children's hands and toys often, even if they don't look dirty.**
- **Mop floors often, and use damp cloths to clean windowsills.** Pour dirty water into the toilet. Dry cloths spread dust.

- **Keep an older home in good repair**

If you live in a house or apartment built before 1978:

- Repair any peeling paint. Call your local health department before you or anyone else does any repair work to find out how to paint and repair safely. If you plan to hire a contractor or to do work in a rental unit, make sure you are familiar with the EPA's Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule. Contact the EPA at 800-424-5323 or [epa.gov/lead](https://www.epa.gov/lead) to learn more.
- Pregnant women and children should stay away from home repairs.
- Be careful toddlers don't eat or play with paint chips, plaster, dust or dirt.
- Ask your landlord or realtor about lead before you rent or buy a home.

- **Don't bring lead into your home**

Lead is in some children's jewelry and charms, and old painted toys and furniture.

Avoid using products that could have lead in them. Lead has been found in some traditional medicine, herbs, spices, and cosmetics from other countries (including Ayurvedic medicines, kohl, surma, liga, greta, azarcon, litargirio, and others).

Be extra careful with jobs or hobbies that involve working with lead, such as building restoration, plumbing, stained glass work, or using lead bullets, lead fishing sinkers, some craft paint, some kinds of pottery glaze, and lead solder.

- Shower, and change work clothes and shoes before going home to children.
- Wash your hands and face after work or hobby.
- Wash work clothes separately from other clothes.

- **Keep lead out of your food**

- Let tap water run for 1 minute before you use it. This will help clear out the lead from old plumbing. Use only cold tap water for drinking, cooking, and preparing infant formula.
- Use lead-free dishes and pots. Lead is more likely to be in pottery from Latin America, the Middle East, and India, and in painted china. Lead is also in leaded glass, crystal, and pewter.
- Avoid using herbs and spices that are contaminated with lead. Contact the FDA to learn more.

- **Serve foods rich in calcium, iron, and vitamin C to help protect children from lead**

Foods with calcium include milk, cheese, yogurt, and spinach. Foods with iron include beans, meat, peas, spinach, eggs, and cereal. Foods with vitamin C include oranges, orange juice, grapefruits, tomatoes, and green peppers.

How can I know if a child has lead poisoning?

A child with lead poisoning usually does not look or feel sick. The only sure way to know is to get a blood lead test.

Every child in New Mexico must be tested at 1 year. Talk to your doctor about testing your child.

Older children may also be at risk if they:

- Live, or regularly visit an older home/building with peeling or chipping paint, or recent remodeling.
- Spent any time outside the U.S. in the past year. *Foreign-born children should be tested upon arrival in the U.S. and again 3-6 months later.*
- Have a brother/sister, housemate/playmate being followed for lead poisoning.
- Eat non-food items or often put things in their mouths (such as toys, keys or jewelry).
- Often come in contact with an adult whose job or hobby involves exposure to lead.

- Use traditional medicine, health remedies, powders, cosmetics, spices or food from other countries.
- Eat food stored, cooked or served in leaded crystal, pewter or pottery from Asia or Latin America.