



American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

Preventing Lead Poisoning

You can make certain that your child doesn't eat lead by removing any sources of leaded paint. There is little cause for worry if your home was built after 1977, when federal regulations restricted the amount of lead permitted in paint. If you live in an older home that has not been painted recently, it would be wise to repaint now. Repair all wall and ceiling cracks and scrape off all traces of old paint before applying the new. The process of repairing and repainting your home should be done carefully, preferably by workers experienced in lead paint removal.

All surfaces with leaded paint should be sealed over with plaster board or paneling, or have the paint removed. If it is to be removed, then as each room is being worked on, it should be closed off from the rest of the house to prevent the spread of leaded dust. The safest thing to do is to move out while the renovation is ongoing and until the final cleaning has been completed. If you are unable to repaint, keep your home as clean as possible and try to control the amount of dust in the air by wet-mopping all bare floors and surfaces with a high phosphate-containing detergent found in hardware stores.

In a rented home, the landlord is responsible for all maintenance, including necessary repainting and repairs. If you suspect unhealthy levels of lead in the building, and your landlord is unresponsive, notify your community's department of health. A representative will inspect the house, and if unhealthy levels of lead are found, you can legally compel the landlord to correct the situation.

Clean and cover any chalking, flaking or chipping paint with a new coat of paint, duct tape or contact paper. It is important to check for paint dust or flaking paint at window areas where children often play. Also be sure to repair areas where paint is dusting, chipping or peeling before placing cribs, playpens, beds or highchairs next to them. Encouraging your children to wash their hands frequently, especially before eating, also can help reduce your child's lead exposure.

If you work around lead or have hobbies that involve lead, change clothes and shoes before entering your home. It's a good idea to keep clothes at work or wash work clothes as soon as possible.

If you have lead pipes, run the first morning tap water for two minutes before using it for drinking or cooking. Do not use hot tap water for mixing formula, drinking or cooking.

You can also reduce the risks of lead by making sure your child eats a well-balanced diet. Give your child nutritious, low-fat foods that are high in calcium and iron, such as meat, beans, spinach and low-fat dairy products. Calcium and iron in particular reduce the amount of lead absorbed by the body.