

Tips to Prevent Lead Exposure

Lead poisoning is entirely preventable. The key is stopping children from coming into contact with lead and treating children who have been poisoned by lead.

The goal is to prevent lead exposure to children *before* they are harmed. There are many ways parents can reduce a child's exposure to lead. The key is stopping children from coming into contact with lead. Lead hazards in a child's environment must be identified and controlled or removed safely.

Lead-based paint is the major source of exposure for lead in U.S. children. All houses built before 1978 are likely to contain some lead-based paint. However, it is the deterioration of this paint that causes a problem. You should determine the construction year of the house or the dwelling where the child may spend a large amount of time (e.g., grandparents or daycare). In housing built before 1978, assume that the paint has lead unless tests show otherwise.

Talk to your state or local health department about testing paint and dust from your home for lead.

Make sure your child does not have access to peeling paint or chewable surfaces painted with lead-based paint.

Pregnant women and children should not be present in housing built before 1978 that is undergoing renovation. They should not participate in activities that disturb old paint or in cleaning up paint debris after work is completed.

(see <http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/training/LBPguide.pdf> for brochure about Lead Paint Safety: a field guide for painting, maintenance, and renovation work)

Create barriers between living/play areas and lead sources. Until environmental clean-up is completed, parents should clean and isolate all sources of lead. They should close and lock doors to keep children away from chipping or peeling paint on walls. You can also apply temporary barriers such as contact paper or duct tape, to cover holes in walls or to block children's access to other sources of lead.

Regularly wash children's hands and toys. Hands and toys can become contaminated from household dust or exterior soil. Both are known lead sources.

Regularly wet-mop floors and wet-wipe window components. Because household dust is a major source of lead, parents should wet-mop floors and wet-wipe horizontal surfaces every 2-3 weeks. Windowsills and wells can contain high levels of leaded dust. They should be kept clean. If feasible, windows should be shut to prevent abrasion of painted surfaces or opened from the top sash.

Prevent children from playing in bare soil; if possible, provide them with sandboxes. Parents should plant grass on areas of bare soil or cover the soil with grass seed, mulch, or wood chips, if possible. Until the bare soil is covered, parents should move play areas away from bare soil and away from the sides of the house. If using a sandbox, parents should also cover the box when not in use to prevent cats from using it as a litter box. That will help protect children from exposure to animal waste.

To further reduce a child's exposure from non-residential paint sources:

- avoid using [traditional home remedies](#) and cosmetics that may contain lead;
- avoid eating [candies](#) imported from Mexico;
- avoid using containers, cookware, or tableware to store or cook foods or liquids that are not shown to be lead free;
- remove recalled [toys](#) and [toy jewelry](#) immediately from children. Check [Lead Recalls](#) lists. Sign up for recalls and view recalls at <http://www.cpsc.gov>. Check <http://www.healthytoys.org> for listings of safe toys. <http://www.aap.org/new/toyrecall.htm> has information about toy safety.
- use only cold [water](#) from the tap for drinking, cooking, and for making baby formula (Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead. Most of the lead in household water usually comes from the plumbing in your house, not from the local water supply.);
- shower and change clothes after finishing a task that involves working with lead-based products such as stain glass work, bullet making, or using a firing range.

From: <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/default.htm>

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Folk Medicine and Childhood Lead Exposure

Lead has been found in some traditional (folk) medicines used by East Indian, Indian, Middle Eastern, West Asian, and Hispanic cultures. Traditional medicines can contain herbs, minerals, metals, or animal products. Lead and other heavy metals are put into certain folk medicines on purpose because these metals are thought to be useful in treating some ailments. Sometimes lead accidentally gets into the folk medicine during grinding, coloring, or other methods of preparation. People selling a remedy may not know whether it contains lead. You cannot tell by looking at or tasting a medicine whether it contains lead. Consuming even small amounts of lead can be harmful. There is no safe blood lead level. Lead poisoning from folk remedies can cause illness and even death.

What to do if you or your child may have taken a medication that contains lead. See your health care provider. He or she can perform a blood test to see whether you have been exposed to lead and if so recommend treatment options. Most adults and children with elevated blood lead levels do not have any symptoms. As blood lead levels increase, so does lead's effects on health.

How to tell if herbal medicines or folk medicines contain lead. You only can tell for sure by having the medicine tested in a laboratory. If you have reason to suspect that you may have consumed lead in a folk remedy, see a health care provider for a blood test.

Which folk medicines are known to contain lead? Lead has been found in powders and tablets given for arthritis, infertility, upset stomach, menstrual cramps, colic and other illnesses.

Greta and Azarcon (also known as alarcon, coral, luiga, maria luisa, or rueda) are Hispanic traditional remedies taken for an upset stomach (empacho), constipation, diarrhea, vomiting, and used on teething babies. Greta and Azarcon are both fine orange powders that have a lead content as high as 90%.

Ghasard, an Indian folk remedy, has also been found to contain lead. It is a brown powder used as a tonic.

Ba-baw-san is a Chinese herbal remedy that contains lead. It is used to treat colic pain or to pacify young children.

Other folk remedies that may contain lead are listed at:

http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/CaseManagement/caseManage_appendixes.htm.

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Candy and Childhood Lead Exposure

The potential for children to be exposed to lead from candy imported from Mexico has prompted the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to issue warnings on the availability of lead-contaminated candy and to develop tighter guidelines for manufacturers, importers, and distributors of imported candy. Lead has been found in some consumer candies imported from Mexico. Certain candy ingredients such as chili powder and tamarind may be a source of lead exposure. Lead sometimes gets into the candy when processes such as drying, storing, and grinding the ingredients are done improperly. Also, lead has been found in the wrappers of some imported candies. The ink of these plastic or paper wrappers may contain lead that leaches into the candy. People selling these candies may not know whether the candy contains lead. You cannot tell by looking at or tasting a candy whether it contains lead. Consuming even small amounts of lead can be harmful. There is no safe blood lead level. Lead poisoning from candies can cause illness.

What to do if you believe you or your child may have eaten candies that contain lead See your health care provider. He or she can perform a blood test to see whether you or your child has been exposed to lead, and if so, recommend treatment options. Most adults and children with elevated blood lead levels do not have any symptoms. As blood lead levels increase, so does lead's effects on health.

How to tell if your candy contains lead. You can tell for sure only by having the candy tested in a laboratory. If you have reason to suspect that you may have consumed lead in candy, see a healthcare provider for a blood test.

How to get more information about lead in candy. The FDA advises that parents, care providers, and others not allow children or pregnant women to eat candy imported from Mexico at this time. More information and advisories on lead in candy can be obtained from the FDA at www.fda.gov or 1-888-463-6332.

From: <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/default.htm>

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