

LEAD IN PAINT

Lead is a highly toxic metal used for many years in products in and around homes. Lead's adverse health effects range from behavioral problems and learning disabilities to seizures and death. Because their bodies are growing quickly, children age 6 and under are at greatest risk. Primary sources of lead exposure for children are deteriorating lead-based paint, lead-contaminated dust, and lead-contaminated residential soil. Lead might be present in any home built up until the 1940s. Rarely found in source water, lead can enter tap water through corrosion of plumbing materials. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, joints, and solder. New homes are also at risk: even legally "lead-free" pipes can contain up to 8 percent lead and leave significant amounts of lead in the water for the first several months after installation. Since the 1980s, EPA and its federal partners have banned or limited lead used in consumer products, including residential paint. Federal regulations limiting the amount of lead in paint sold for residential use started in 1978. If your property was built before 1978 or you are considering remodeling, renovating, or repair, you may wish to think about lead inspection. Water quality can be compromised by such other trace elements as iron, excess acidity, manganese, calcium, magnesium, mineral salts, hydrogen sulphide, selenium, chromium, arsenic, mercury, and cadmium.

Excerpts from U.S. Department of Environmental Protection, "Lead in Paint, Dust, and Soil".

Lead FAQs

Why is lead in some homes?

Lead is a highly toxic metal that was used for many years in products found in and around our homes. In general, the older a home, the more likely it has lead-based paint.

The most common sources of household lead are:

- **Paint-** The federal government banned lead-based paint from housing in 1978, but homes built before this time may have used lead paint.
- **Dust-** Household dust can be contaminated with lead from paint, as can the soil around a house whose exterior was painted with lead paint.

- **Drinking water-** Your home might have plumbing with lead or lead solder.

Can lead cause health problems?

If not detected early, children with high levels of lead in their bodies can suffer from damage to the brain and nervous system, behavior and learning problems, slowed growth, hearing problems and headaches.

Lead is also harmful to adults. Adults can suffer from difficulties during pregnancy, high blood pressure, digestive problems, nerve disorders, memory and concentration problems, and muscle and joint pain.

What should I do about lead?

You can temporarily reduce lead hazards by taking actions such as repairing damaged painted surfaces and planting grass to cover soil with high lead levels. These actions are not permanent solutions and will need ongoing attention.

To permanently remove lead hazards, you must hire a certified lead abatement contractor. Abatement methods include removing, sealing, or enclosing lead-based paint with special materials.

Who should do the cleanup?

Always hire a person with special training for correcting lead problems -- someone who knows how to do this work safely and has the proper equipment to clean up thoroughly. Certified contractors will employ qualified workers and follow strict safety rules set by their state or the federal government. Contact the [National Lead Information Center](#) for help with locating certified contractors in your area and to see if financial assistance is available.

The above information is provided as a public service by the Environmental Protection Agency for educational purposes.