

# How to Make a Home Lead-Safe

Remember: (1) all children with high lead levels should eat healthy meals and snacks at regular intervals; (2) diets should be rich in calcium (milk, dairy products) and iron (formula with iron, cereals, dark green vegetables, meats), with the right amount of fat for the child's age; (3) avoid giving lots of high-fat foods.

1. Older homes have house paints made before 1950 which often contain much lead; house paints from 1950 to 1978 have less lead. Due to laws, all house paints made after 1978 are lead-free. Chips, flakes, and dusts from lead-containing paints can poison children when swallowed.  
**Suggestion:** (a) wash children's hands often, and before eating; (b) carefully clean up paint chips; (c) reduce lead dust levels in the home by wet-mopping and damp-dusting often with detergent, then rinsing with plain water; (d) never remove intact paint without the help of an expert, unless you know it does not contain lead.  
children play on or under painted porches or balconies; (b) clean as suggested in #1 and #2, above.
2. Highest lead levels are often found on woodwork, windows, and doors.  
**Suggestion:** (a) block children's access to peeling paint; (b) carefully remove chips by wet-wiping with a detergent; (c) throw away chips in plastic bags out of the reach of children, and wet-mop any dust; (d) contact paper and duct tape can be used temporarily to cover chipping surfaces. Do not try to remove intact paint without the help of an expert.
3. Exterior house paint may contain large amounts of lead which weathers into chips and dust. Many older porches may have lead-containing paint.  
**Suggestion:** (a) avoid letting
4. Soil and playthings may contain lead dust from paint, industry, or past auto exhaust. **Suggestion:** (a) avoid play on bare soil; (b) plant grass or shrubs, or lay mulch or stone over bare soil, or permanently cover with cement; (c) wash and rinse equipment; (d) place doormats at all entrances to the home and remove shoes at entry.
5. Removing paint can create lead dust in the home. **Suggestion:** dust control as in #1 and #4, above.
6. Older windows were often painted with lead paint. **Suggestion:** (a) block children's access to window wells/troughs by shutting windows or blocking with furniture; (b) do not allow child to chew on sill; (c) wet-clean window sills and wells/troughs often with a detergent, then rinse with water.
7. Lead can enter the home on workers' clothing. Some hobbies use lead. **Suggestion:** (a) workers exposed to lead should shower and change away from home; (b) keep any lead-containing materials out of children's reach; dust control as in #1.

8. Lead can enter drinking water from lead pipes, solder, or storage tanks. **Suggestion:** (a) allow cold taps to run until water is cold before drinking or using in cooking; (b) never drink hot or warm tap water or use in cooking.
9. Imported or older pottery and porcelain may contain lead. Pewter and crystal also may contain lead. Lead can leach out of these dishes into food. **Suggestion:** avoid using as holder for food unless you are sure it is lead-free.
10. The child is more likely to swallow lead. **Suggestion:** (a) frequently clean pacifiers, toys, and surfaces the child may mouth; (b) wash child's hands often; (c) keep fingernails clean and trimmed.
11. Lead can leach from can solder, especially with acid foods like tomatoes. U.S. cans are usually safe. **Suggestion:** (a) never store foods in opened cans; (b) avoid imported canned foods for young children unless you are sure the can is lead-free.
12. Imported vinyl mini-blinds may contain lead and produce lead dust as they age. **Suggestion:** remove imported vinyl mini-blinds from the home, unless they are labeled as non-leaded or no lead added.
13. Lead more easily enters the bodies of children who don't eat regularly, don't get enough food, or who consume too little calcium or iron. **Suggestion:** (a) regular meals and snacks; (b) recommended amounts of calcium and iron (see top of this page).
14. Some home remedies and traditional cosmetics have a very high lead content. Such remedies include; alkohl, bala goli, coral, ghasard, liga, and rueda. Some mineral supplements contain lead. **Suggestion:** keep out of reach of children and only use products shown to be lead-free.
15. Fumes from lead paint may be hazardous. **Suggestion:** never burn painted wood.
16. Lead-containing dusts could drift into home or outdoor play areas. **Suggestion:** dust and soil control as in #1 and #4.
17. Control of lead in air, water, soil, gasoline, and consumer products is lacking in many developing and Eastern European countries. **Suggestion:** review all footnotes and test blood lead levels when appropriate.

Originally produced by Seth Foldy, MD, and the *Cleveland Lead Hazard Abatement Project*. Revised by Dr. Foldy (City of Milwaukee Health Department) and Helen Binns, MD, MPH (Children's Memorial Hospital, Chicago, IL) in January 1998, with review by the Chicago-Area Health Care Providers' Lead Consortium. 1999 Seth Foldy and Children's Memorial Hospital. Full permission is granted to reproduce this Guide, provided the authors are identified.