



## Lead in Soil

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### Why is lead in soil?

Almost all of lead in soil comes from lead-based paint chips flaking from homes, factory pollution, and from the use of leaded gasoline. Over time, lead builds up in soil. Lead levels in soil are usually higher in cities, near roadways and industries that use lead, and next to older homes where crumbling lead paint has fallen into the soil.

### How much is too much?

The danger of lead in soil depends on:

- The amount of lead in the soil around your house
- The amount of soil that gets into your child

The amount of lead in soil is measured in parts per million (ppm). The greater the amount of lead in soil, the higher the ppm number. Soil naturally has small amounts of lead in it, about 50 ppm. 200-500 ppm of lead is commonly found in city soil. 1,000 ppm is a high amount of lead in soil, and is defined as hazardous waste.

### How does lead get from the soil into my child?

Lead dirt clings to fingers, toys and other objects that children normally put in their mouths. This is the most common way that lead in soil gets into your child. Lead in soil does not pass through unbroken skin. If soil is covered with plants, rocks or other ground cover, children have less contact with the dirt and the lead in it. The more lead that is in your soil, the more harmful the soil can be to your children's health.

### Can I protect my child from lead in soil?

If the amount of lead in your soil is 200 ppm or over, and if the soil is not covered with many plants or thick ground cover, then you should consider one or more of the following suggestions to make your soil safer.

- Prevent nearby sources of lead from contaminating soil, for example, control peeling house paint. Call your local health department for appropriate methods.
- Plant and maintain grass or other thick ground cover.

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- Cover the soil with a thick layer of gravel, wood chips, or other materials.
- Pave the area.
- If you have no other alternatives, remove the top 3 to 6 inches of soil and replace with uncontaminated soil.

***CAUTION: Soil with lead levels of 1,000 ppm or more is considered hazardous waste by the California Department of Health Services. Before you move soil, call the Solano County Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (707) 784-8070.***



*The information on this page was developed by Santa Clara County CLPPP.*