



# Lead in Paint

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## Why is lead in paint?

Lead was used to make paint last longer. In 1978, lead was banned from house paint. If your home was built before 1978, there may be lead in the paint. Lead-based paint is still the most common source of lead poisoning in children.

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

Any person can become lead poisoned, but a child younger than 6 years old is at a higher risk. Over time, painted surfaces crumble into household dust. This dust clings to toys, fingers and other objects that children put in their mouths. This is the most common way that lead gets into your child. This lead containing dust can also get into the soil around the home.

A pregnant woman can also pass lead to her unborn child. The baby can be born too small or too early. If a pregnant woman's lead level is very high, there is a higher chance of a miscarriage.

Lead gets into your body and into your child's body by:

- eating or breathing dust that is contaminated by lead from paint
- eating lead paint chips or soil contaminated by lead from paint
- eating lead contaminated fruits and vegetables that absorbed lead from the soil
- eating food off dishes made with lead or food stored in leaded dishware (such as crystal, some imported pottery and some ceramic dishes)
- placing items in your mouth that are contaminated with lead (some toys, jewelry, keys, etc.)
- drinking tap water that has lead in it (some homes may have leaded pipes that may leach into the water).

Lead is a poison that can harm the brain, kidneys, and other organs, especially in children. Children with even a small amount of lead in their body can have an impact on their development, making it hard for them to learn, pay attention, and behave.

Most children who have lead poisoning do not look or act obviously sick. The only way to know if your child has lead poisoning is to have your doctor give your child a blood test for lead. Children should be tested at 1 and 2 years old for lead poisoning. Also, children should be tested if they are between the ages of 1 and 6 years and have not been tested for lead before.

### **What do I do if my home has been painted with lead-based paint?**

There are many dangers involved in removing lead paint from your home. Every member of your family can be poisoned if removal is done incorrectly. There are three ways to make the lead paint in your home less dangerous. The first two below are often the safest ways to handle lead paint.

#### **Replace it.**

Replacing a lead painted object means removing the object from the house and replacing it with a new, lead-free item. For example, a door may be removed by its hinges and replaced with a new, safe door. This takes the lead out of your home and it does not create a lot of lead dust.

#### **Cover it.**

It is often best to cover surfaces that cannot be replaced, such as walls or floors, with a long lasting, tough material like sheetrock, paneling, floor tiles, or contact paper. However, covering surfaces does not get the lead paint out of your home; walls or floors that are newly covered must be kept in good condition.

**Repainting with new paint or hanging wallpaper covers lead paint. However, if the new paint or wallpaper peels, the lead paint will be exposed again.**

#### **Remove it.**

*Sanding, burning or scraping lead paint is the most dangerous way of removing lead paint. Lead paint needs to be removed by certified contractors who have been trained in safe paint removal.*

#### **Before work begins:**

Pregnant women, children, and family pets should not be present when this type of work is being done. Only those who are working should be in the

home and the work area should be sealed off from the rest of the house with heavy plastic and tape.

Test the paint in any area you plan to remodel before you begin the work to make sure a contractor is not required for the job if lead is present.

To find a certified contractor, go to the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) website.

For more information, contact the Solano County Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (707) 784-8070.

