5. Reduce the risk from lead paint.

Most homes built before 1960 contain leaded paint. Some homes built as recently as 1978 may also contain lead paint. This paint was used in paint, gasoline, water pipes, and many other products. Now that we know the dangers of lead, house paint is almost lead-free, leaded gasoline has been phased out, and household plumbing is no longer made with lead materials.

6. Get your child tested.

Even children who appear healthy may have high levels of lead. You can’t tell if a child has lead poisoning unless you have him or her tested. A blood test takes only ten minutes, and results should be ready within a week.

Children who should be tested under your state or local screening plan:

- Children who have been exposed to high levels of lead.
- Children under age 6 who live in areas with high levels of lead.
- Children of low-income families.
- Children of families with a child who has been exposed to high levels of lead.
- Children who attend daycare centers or playgroups.

The only way to know if you have lead in your body is to have it tested. If you think your plumbing might have lead, your supplier to see how to get it tested.

Make sure your children wash their hands before meals, nap time, and bedtime.

4. Don’t remove lead paint yourself.

Families have been poisoned by scraping or sanding lead paint because these activities generate large amounts of lead dust. Lead dust from repairs or renovations of older buildings can remain in the building long after the work is completed. Heating paint may release lead into the air.

Ask your local or state health department if they will test your home for lead paint. Some will test for free. Home test kits cannot detect small amounts of lead under some conditions.

Hire a person with special training for correcting lead paint problems to remove lead paint from your home, someone who knows how to do this work safely and has the proper equipment to clean up and a thorough cleanup is done.

1. Get your child tested.

Even children who appear healthy may have high levels of lead. You can’t tell if a child has lead poisoning unless you have him or her tested. A blood test takes only ten minutes, and results should be ready within a week.

Blood tests are usually recommended for:

- Children at ages 1 and 2.
- Children or other family members who have been exposed to high levels of lead.

2. Keep it clean.

Ordinary dust and dirt may contain lead. Children can swallow lead or breathe lead contaminated dust if they play in dust or dirt and then put their fingers or toys in their mouths, or if they eat without washing their hands first.

- Keep the areas where your children play as dust-free and clean as possible.
- Wash pacifiers and bottles after they fall on the floor. Keep extra hands.
- Clean floors, window frames, window sills, and other surfaces weekly. Use a mop, sponge, or paper towel with warm water and a general all-purpose cleaner. If you can’t do a thorough cleaning, use a general all-purpose cleaner and a thorough cleanup is done.

When you clean a surface:

- Use cleaning fluid that is marked "labeled to remove lead paint." Clean floors, window frames, window sills, and other surfaces weekly. Use a mop, sponge, or paper towel with warm water and a general all-purpose cleaner. If you can’t do a thorough cleaning, use a general all-purpose cleaner and a thorough cleanup is done.

- Wash pacifiers and bottles after they fall on the floor. Keep extra hands.
- Clean floors, window frames, window sills, and other surfaces weekly.
- Use a mop, sponge, or paper towel with warm water and a general all-purpose cleaner. If you can’t do a thorough cleaning, use a general all-purpose cleaner and a thorough cleanup is done.

- Wash toys and stuffed animals regularly.

How lead affects your child’s health

The long-term effects of lead in a child can be severe. They include learning disabilities, decreased growth, hyperactivity, impaired hearing, and even brain damage. If caught early, these effects can be limited by reducing exposure to lead or by medical treatment. If you are pregnant, avoid exposing yourself to lead. Lead can pass through your body to your baby. The good news is that there are simple things you can do to help protect your family.

1. Get your child tested.

Even children who appear healthy may have high levels of lead. You can’t tell if a child has lead poisoning unless you have him or her tested. A blood test takes only ten minutes, and results should be ready within a week.

Blood tests are usually recommended for:

- Children at ages 1 and 2.
- Children or other family members who have been exposed to high levels of lead.
Get your child tested for lead poisoning, even if he or she seems healthy.

Clean floors, window frames, window sills, and other surfaces weekly. Use a mop, sponge, or paper towel with warm water and a general all-purpose cleaner or a cleaner made specifically for lead.

Reduce the risk of lead paint. Make sure your child is not chewing on anything covered with lead paint.

Don’t try to remove lead paint yourself.

Don’t bring lead dust into your home from work or a hobby.

Have your water tested. If the cold water hasn’t been used for more than a few hours, let it run for 15–30 seconds before drinking it or cooking with it.

Eat right and don’t store food in high-lead pottery.

Lead poisoning is a serious problem for young children—the younger the child, the greater the risk.

For More Information

EPA’s Safe Drinking Water Hotline
1-800-426-4791

National Lead Information Center
1-800-424-LEAD

Visit our web site
http://www.epa.gov/lead

United States Environmental Protection Agency ● Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics ● Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water