



Lead poisoning is a serious but *preventable* health problem. Lead is a highly toxic metal that can harm anyone, but young children and pregnant women are at special risk.

Too much lead in the body, or lead poisoning, in children can:

- Hurt the brain, kidneys, and nervous system
- Slow down growth and development
- Make it hard to learn
- Damage hearing and speech
- Cause behavior problems

In pregnant women, lead can increase the risk of miscarriage and cause babies to be born too early, too small, or with learning or behavior problems. In adults, lead can cause high blood pressure and result in decreased fertility in men.

Lead Paint in Housing

In Vermont, children are most often lead poisoned from lead dust, either by eating it when they put their hands or objects in their mouths or by breathing it in. Adults can be exposed to lead during renovation projects or whenever lead paint is improperly sanded, scraped or burned.

The most common source of lead dust is in houses built before 1978, the year lead was banned from house paint. Most homes built before that year still

contain lead. Even if the home has been repainted, the action of opening and closing doors and windows can release lead dust from the original paint into the home.

Lead in Soil and Water

Soil may be contaminated with lead along the side of older homes from lead-based paint flaking off and near roadways or driveways from car exhaust when leaded gasoline was widely used. Small amounts of lead may occur naturally in soil. Some lead contamination comes from industrial sources such as lead battery manufacturing plants or brass foundries. This soil can be tracked into the house on shoes. It is very easy for a child to swallow some of this contaminated dirt while playing outside. To prevent lead poisoning, children should never play in bare soil.

Drinking water may contain lead from old lead pipes, plumbing fixtures, or solder. Always run the water until it is cold to use for cooking, drinking, and making baby formula. Lead pipes should be replaced.

Lead-Safe Work Practices

The Vermont Lead Law – passed in 1996 and updated in 2008 (18 VSA Chapter 38) – is designed to protect children and families from lead hazards.

The law assumes all paint in pre-1978 housing is lead-based, unless a licensed lead inspector or lead risk assessor has determined that it is lead-free. The law prohibits certain unsafe work practices that increase the risk of lead exposure and requires lead-safe work practices when disturbing more than 1 square foot of paint in pre-1978 housing.

Prohibited work practices include removing paint by:

- Open flame burning or torching
- Use of heat guns operated above 1,100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Dry scraping
- Machine sanding or grinding
- Uncontained hydro-blasting or high-pressure washing
- Abrasive blasting or sandblasting without containment and high-efficiency particulate exhaust controls

Required safe work practices include:

- Limiting access to interior and exterior work areas
- Enclosing interior work areas with plastic sheeting or other effective lead dust barrier
- Using protective clothing
- Misting painted surfaces with water before disturbing paint
- Wet-mopping during cleanup to limit the creation of dust

Other Sources of Lead

Jobs that can expose workers to lead:

- Construction and renovation work
- Auto repair and work with batteries
- Plumbing
- Welding or soldering

Dishware that can contain lead:

- Glazed pottery, like bean pots
- Metal pots with lead solder (samovars)
- Antique or vintage dishware

Products that can contain lead:

- Toy jewelry made in other countries
- Toys made in other countries
- Imported candy, especially from Mexico
- Imported make-up and home remedies

Hobbies that can expose you to lead:

- Stained glass
- Bullets
- Fishing sinkers

Check with the Consumer Product Safety Commission regularly for recalled products that are lead hazards: www.cpsc.gov

For more information call the Healthy Homes Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (802) 863-7220 or (800) 439-8550 (toll-free in Vermont) or visit healthvermont.gov