



## Collecting vintage goods, antiques, and salvaged building materials is a popular hobby in Vermont, but be aware that older items in your home can contain lead.

Lead has commonly been used in many older household items and consumer goods—such as paint, furniture, jewelry, glassware and dishes, leaded crystal, brass, pewter, ceramics, tools, toys, and other items. Vermonters who own these items can be exposed to lead. Salvaged building materials—including doors, windows, sinks, bathtubs, and plumbing fixtures—can also create lead risks, even in newer homes.

If you are unsure about the presence of lead, assume all vintage, antique, and salvaged items contain lead.

To live safely with older items, you should be aware of the health effects of lead and how to prevent lead exposure.

### Lead Poisoning

Lead is a highly toxic metal that can harm anyone, but young children and pregnant women are at special risk. 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

Lead poisoning in pregnant women can increase the risk of miscarriage and cause babies to be born too small or too early.

There are two ways children and adults can be exposed to lead: swallowing it or breathing it in. Lead-based paint on surfaces crumbles over time into invisible dust—especially when opening and closing windows and doors—that collects in homes.

Young children are commonly exposed to lead by swallowing it. Children may eat, chew or suck on lead-painted objects such as windowsills, toys, or furniture. Lead dust clings to hands, toys, and objects that children put in their mouths.

Lead dust can also be created when lead-based paint is improperly sanded, scraped, or burned. Both children and adults can breathe in lead dust. Lead dust can get on adults' hands or face, and they can swallow it when they eat, drink, or smoke.

Testing is the only way to find out if someone has been exposed to lead. The Health Department recommends that all children be tested for lead at age 1 and age 2. Talk to your health care provider about testing for lead.

### Salvaged Building Materials

Vermont has some of the nation's oldest housing stock and commercial buildings. About 70% of Vermont homes were built before 1978, the year lead was banned from house paint.

Over a period of years, lead from lead-based paint seeps into the wood, and the stripping process can further drive lead into wood. Lead dust can be created by disturbing the stripped wood.

To protect yourself and others, refinish or seal any salvaged building materials—windows, window frames and sashes, doors, banisters, balusters, and other frequently handled items. (See "Safety Essentials" section on next page.)

When transporting salvaged items, wrap them in plastic to reduce the spread of lead paint chips and dust.

# DIY Safety Essentials

If you are refinishing or sealing an item with chipping and peeling paint, follow these guidelines.

- Set up properly: Work outside the house when possible—in a garage, for example. Enclose the work area with plastic sheeting. **Keep children and pregnant women away from the area, along with food and drink.**
- Contain it: Any time you leave the work area or when you're finished, **remove shoes or shoe covers.**
- Protect yourself: **Wear safety glasses and protective clothing** that can be thrown away or washed separately. Wear a HEPA dust mask



(respirator) for work that produces a lot of dust. **Wash your hands and face** after leaving the work area and before eating, drinking, or smoking.

- Work wet: **Spray water on surfaces you are scraping and sanding.** Don't use a power sander.
- Clean often: **Collect paint chips and use a damp rag** to pick up all dust.
- Finish clean: Use a **vacuum with a HEPA filter**—one that will catch and hold fine lead dust—then **wipe surfaces with a damp cloth** and wet mop if needed. Place all used rags, mop heads, disposable clothing, and plastic sheeting in trash bags. Flush dirty water down the toilet.

For more information, see the *Don't Spread Lead* guide and video on [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov)

## Keep Your Water Safe

If using salvaged faucets or fixtures, especially those made of brass and chrome, run water as cold as it can get before using it for drinking, making food and formula, and cooking. You can test your water for lead by calling the Health Department Laboratory at (802) 338-4736 or (800) 660-9997.

## Cookware and Kitchenware

Lead can be found in some vintage and antique glassware and dishes—such as leaded crystal, brass, pewter, and ceramics. Lead can also be found in some new imported ceramics and glazed pottery.

Unless you know these items are lead-free, assume they contain lead. Don't eat, drink, or store food or liquids in these items.

## What about items for display?

Vintage goods or antiques used only for viewing—such as trinkets, jewelry toys, or tools—pose less of a health

risk. Clean these items lightly with a damp cloth or vacuum using a vacuum with a HEPA filter. Consider displaying them out of children's reach.

## How do I know if older items contain lead?

It's safest to assume older items contain lead unless you are sure they do not. Only testing can determine whether you have lead in your home or in any vintage, antique, or salvaged item. Contact a certified laboratory to have items tested for lead.

Not all vintage items contain lead, but you should know what's in your home.

## How can I learn more?

Visit [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov) to learn more about lead and lead safety or call the Healthy Homes Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (802) 863-7220 or (800) 439-8550.