

Pregnancy and Lead Poisoning

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Lead is a toxic metal that hurts the brain, kidneys and nervous system of children. There is no safe level of lead in the body. If you are exposed to lead during pregnancy, it may affect your baby. Too much lead in your body during pregnancy can:

- Increase the risk of miscarriage
- Cause babies to be born too small or too early
- Cause babies to have learning or behavior problems

Breastfeeding is still recommended unless your blood lead level is so high that it would put the baby at risk. A blood test is the only way to know how much lead is in your body. Lead poisoning can be prevented. Protect yourself and your baby while you are pregnant and after your baby is born.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact AHS.HealthyHomes@vermont.gov.

How can I protect my baby before birth?

If your home was built before 1978:

Reduce the amount of lead dust:

- Use only a vacuum with a HEPA filter and vacuum slowly.
- Wet mop floors instead of sweeping.
- Use disposable towels to wet-clean window sills and other surfaces.
- Leave shoes at the door to prevent tracking soil that contains lead into your home.
- Install window-well inserts to provide a smooth cleaning surface.
- Cover or paint over chipped, peeling, or cracked paint

Use lead-safe renovation and repair practices:

- Whoever works on your home should use lead-safe work practices, like wet-sanding and wet-scraping to reduce the amount of lead dust.
- Do not remove paint, clean up after removing paint, or remodel a room that might have lead paint while you are pregnant.

Eat healthy foods and wash your hands often.

- Fruits, vegetables, and dairy products high in iron, calcium and vitamin C protect your body and your baby from lead.

- Always wash your hands before preparing and eating food. Lead dust found around your home can get onto your hands.

What are other ways I can protect my baby?

There are many sources of lead. Make sure you are aware of lead hazards at your home and where you work.

Lead paint

Dust from lead paint is the major source of lead poisoning in Vermont. Lead was banned from house paint in 1978. Homes built before then likely contain lead. Adults and children can be exposed to lead during renovation projects or from chipped, peeling or cracked paint. You can breathe in or swallow the lead dust. Always use lead-safe practices when renovating or repairing your home. If you rent a home built before 1978, your landlord must fix chipping and peeling paint in a lead-safe way.

Soil

Lead dust may be found in soil from lead paint that flakes off the outside of buildings and from car exhaust when lead was in gasoline.

Plant vegetable and other food gardens in lead-free soil and at least three feet from buildings and away from busy streets or highways.

Drinking water

Lead gets into drinking water as it moves through lead, copper or galvanized iron pipes and fittings, lead solder, or brass or chrome fixtures.

Test your drinking water for lead using both a first draw and a flush test kit.

Other sources of lead

- Materials from jobs and hobbies like stained glass, artist painting, and making fishing weights and bullets
- Dishes made of ceramics, crystal, glazed pottery (like bean pots), and metal pots with lead solder (samovars)
- Imported products from other countries such as jewelry, medallions and charms, canned goods, candy (especially from Mexico), cosmetics, and natural remedies
- Salvaged materials from buildings built before 1978 such as window frames, doors, lumber, and siding
- Antique items like painted tin panels, hardware, jewelry, toys, and furniture
- Venison and small game harvested with lead bullets and lead shots