

## Why is lead paint dangerous?

Lead-based paint peels, chips and crumbles over time into invisible dust that collects in homes. Adults and children can swallow or breathe in the dust. The dust clings to toys, fingers and other objects that children can put into their mouths.

Lead paint on the outside of your house can also increase a child's risk of lead poisoning. As the lead paint ages, flakes and chips fall on the ground, mixing with the soil and contaminating the area around your home. A child can easily swallow some of the contaminated dirt while playing outside.

Lead is a highly toxic metal. Too much lead in the body can cause serious and permanent health problems for anyone, but children and pregnant women are at special risk. The Health Department recommends testing all children at ages 1 and 2. Talk to your health care provider about testing.

## How can I find out if my home has lead paint?

1. Send paint samples to a certified laboratory.
2. Hire a private testing company to test your home using an x-ray fluorescence analyzer, commonly called an XRF.
3. Do not rely on a home lead test kit to give you an accurate result. Follow up any home test with a lead risk assessor.



The Health Department has a list of certified laboratories and licensed inspectors to perform lead tests.

## How can I reduce my child's risk of lead poisoning?

- At least once a week, use an all-purpose cleaning solution to wipe down windowsills including wells, tracks, and other surfaces where dust collects.
- Use a vacuum with a High Energy Particulate Air (HEPA) filter to vacuum carpeted areas at least once a week to remove lead paint chips, flakes and dust.
- Block your child's access to any areas that may have peeling paint with a fence or gate.
- Wash your child's hands, face, pacifier, and toys frequently to prevent him or her from eating lead dirt or dust.
- Don't let your child play in the dirt around old buildings with peeling paint.
- Provide your child with a diet high in calcium and iron, which helps the body to absorb less lead.

## What if I have lead in my home?

1. **Repaint.** This is not a permanent solution but may reduce lead exposure. Rental properties and childcare facilities are required by law to fix paint. Property owners can take a course to learn how.
2. **Replace lead-painted objects.** Remove them from your home and get new lead-free replacements for objects such as doors, window casings, moldings and trim. Do not burn any of the lead-painted items after you remove them because burning can release toxic lead vapors. Instead, wrap the items in heavy plastic and dispose of them in a landfill.
3. **Permanently cover surfaces that cannot be replaced.** For example, floors and walls can be covered with a permanent covering such as sheetrock, paneling or floor tiles. Wallpaper can be used to cover areas where lead may be

found in the short term. Because the lead paint is still present, be sure to keep the covering in good condition.

4. **When replacement or covering is not possible, remove lead paint.** This is the most dangerous way of eliminating lead in your home. Improper lead removal can actually increase the risks of lead poisoning. Because of the hazardous nature of this procedure, it's best to have the work done by a licensed professional. Vermont law requires those who do lead abatement (lead removal) to be licensed by the Health Department.

If you're working on your home, find out more about home renovations and your health on [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov).

For information, call the Healthy Homes Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (802) 863-7220 or (800) 439-8550, or visit [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov).