

Some chances are just plain luck.

But when it comes to getting your child off to a safe and healthy start, you can beat the odds, especially the odds for lead poisoning.

Children who suffer from lead poisoning may have problems with learning, hearing loss, and other serious health problems that can last a lifetime.

But you don't need any luck at all to take this chance.

You just need to take a few simple steps.

What's amazing is that as serious as lead poisoning can be, it's pretty easy to prevent.

You'll have to do a little work, but the pay-off, your child's future, is well worth it.



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*It just takes a few simple steps to help fight lead poisoning.  
Give your child the chance of a lifetime!*



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Give Your Child the  
**Chance**  
of a **Lifetime**  
*Keep Your Child Lead-Safe*



**LEAD**  
Awareness  
Program



Childhood lead poisoning is a major environmental health problem in the U.S.

Lead in children can cause:

- Nervous system and kidney damage;
- Learning disabilities;
- Attention Deficit Disorder; and
- Decreased intelligence.

### Where Does Lead Poisoning Come From?

Before 1978, some paint used in houses and apartments, inside and out, contained lead.

People can get lead in their body if they:

- Put their hands or other objects covered with lead dust in their mouths.
- Eat paint chips or soil that contains lead.
- Breathe in lead dust, especially during renovations that disturb painted surfaces.

Children are more likely to be affected by lead dust than adults because they are more likely to put their hands and other objects into their mouths.

Old water pipes can contain lead, too. Bathing in it isn't a problem, but drinking or cooking with it could be.

### How Can You Tell If Your Child Has Been Exposed To Lead?

Since the signs of lead poisoning aren't easy to spot, the only sure way to know if a child has too much lead in his or her body is with a **simple blood test**. Children with high levels of lead may complain of **headaches** or **stomachaches**, or may become very **irritable** and **tired**.

### What Can You Do About Lead in Your Home?

You can do a lot. And most of it is just common sense stuff that you would probably do, anyway.

One of the most important things is to find out whether there is any lead-based paint or other sources of lead where you live or where your children play or visit often. How do you do that?

- **If your home was built before 1978**, it may contain lead-based paint. Don't remove lead paint yourself. Hire a trained and certified professional to test your home for lead. **Call 1-800-424-LEAD (5323)** for a list of contacts in your area.
- **If you rent**, it is your landlord's job to keep paint in good shape. Report peeling or chipping paint to your landlord and call your health department if the paint is not repaired safely.

- **If you own a home**, ask the previous owners or the realtor how old the home is to determine whether or not you should be concerned about lead in your home.
- **Contact your local health department or water supplier** to have your water tested for lead.

### Follow the Few Simple Rules to Prevent Lead Poisoning.



### Talk To Your Child's Doctor About Having Your Children Tested For Lead Poisoning.

**Tell your doctor that you'd like to have your children, especially those under age 6, tested for lead.** Your doctor can explain how important it is to have children from 6 months to 2 years tested. During these 18 months, children grow the most. Head Start also requires a blood test when a child enters the program. Ask the Health Specialist at your local Head Start center to tell you about the process.

### Here's One Thing You Should NOT Do:

Don't try to remove lead-based paint by yourself. Hire a professional who has training in lead-safe work practices. Infants, children, and pregnant women should not be in the home while renovations and repairs are under way. Be sure they can stay with a relative or a neighbor.

Checking the paint and pipes is probably the hardest part of protecting your child from lead poisoning. You can't really do it by yourself. But you and your family can do a lot on your own without any expert advice. Join with other Head Start parents and ask representatives of your local health and environmental departments to come speak to a group of parents about lead poisoning prevention.



chances  
Some chances only come around once...  
Like winning the lottery...or...meeting your soulmate...  
...Giving your child a great start in life is one that will last forever.

## Set a Few Simple Rules for You and Your Children.

- ▶ Get your young children tested for lead, even if they seem healthy.
- ▶ Make sure the whole family washes their hands before meals and before going to bed.
- ▶ Wash toys, bottles, and pacifiers regularly.
- ▶ Clean up any peeling or chipping paint, and don't let children play with paint chips.
- ▶ Mop floors regularly.
- ▶ If you think your windowsills may contain lead-based paint, wipe them down with a wet cloth each time you open and close them.
- ▶ Take down old, vinyl mini-blinds that may contain lead and buy blinds that are labeled as "lead-free."
- ▶ Let water run until it becomes cold as it will get. This could take as little as 15 to 30 seconds if there has been recent heavy water use such as showering or toilet flushing (Let water run longer if responding to your local conditions). If possible, use a filter for drinking and cooking water.
- ▶ If your job exposes you to lead, remove work clothes at work and wash your work clothes separately from the clothes you wear around your family.
- ▶ Cover dirt with mulch or other plants especially next to your home to keep children away from lead paint chips or flakes that may fall from painted outside walls.
- ▶ Do not store food in glazed pottery from foreign countries.
- ▶ Feed children healthy, low-fat foods high in calcium, iron, and vitamin C. Lead in the body stops good vitamins, such as iron and calcium, from working right.

These small investments of time and effort don't seem all that hard when you're helping your child to a whole lifetime of good health. Remember, it isn't about luck. It's about protecting your child from lead poisoning.

## Where Can I Find More Information?

For more information on lead and lead poisoning, contact the National Lead Information Center at **1-800-424-LEAD (5323)**, where specialists can speak to you in English and Spanish, call your local health department, or visit EPA's Web site at [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead).