



# PREVENTION MATTERS

THE CENTER FOR INJURY PREVENTION AND POLICY

## Lead Poisoning

Lead poisoning is the most preventable environmental disease in young children. However, half a million children in the U.S. have blood lead levels above the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) reference level. If someone's lead level is higher than this cut off, they need to seek medical attention. A simple blood test can help to determine treatment and prevent damage that could last a lifetime.

Lead is a metal that can be deadly when swallowed or breathed into the body. Lead in the home is often caused by chipping, peeling, or flaking lead-based paint. This can be found in even the cleanest of homes. Lead can also be found in toys and jewelry or may be brought home from the workplace. Dust from lead paint continues to be the number one source of childhood lead poisoning.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there is **no safe level of lead in the body**. However when children are tested, pediatricians look for a blood lead level of 5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  or higher before recommending follow-up.

### Where is Lead Found?

Lead can be found on painted surfaces inside and outside the home. Lead is usually found on:

- Window sills
- Window frames
- Door frames
- Stair railings
- Steps
- Soil

Lead can also be found in:

- Jewelry
- Toys
- Batteries
- Crystal
- Ceramics (pottery)
- Make up
- Imported goods
- Folk remedies
- Water that runs through lead pipes

### Who is Most at Risk for Lead Poisoning?

- Children (1-6 years of age)
- Pregnant women
- Anyone living in homes built before 1978

### Lead Poisoning in Children Can Cause:

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Learning and behavior problems
- Slow growth and development
- Hearing and speech problems
- Headaches

### Lead Poisoning in Adults Can Cause:

- Problems having children (in both men and women)
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Brain or nerve damage
- Memory and concentration problems
- Muscle and joint pain



### FOR MORE INFORMATION ON:

Center for Injury Prevention and Policy: [umm.edu/CIPP](http://umm.edu/CIPP)  
STC Prevention Matters: [umm.edu/PreventionMatters](http://umm.edu/PreventionMatters)

## LOCAL SPOTLIGHT: Baltimore City



The lead dust equivalent of only **three granules of sugar** is all it takes to poison a child.

Most children with lead poisoning come from cities like Baltimore. In fact, Baltimore's rate of lead poisoning in children is 3 times the national average. Still, only 28% of children under the age of 6 in Baltimore were actually tested in 2017.

**ALL CHILDREN between 6 months and 6 years of age should be checked for lead.** Many children have blood lead tests as part of their regular care by a doctor or clinic. Be sure to ask your doctor or clinic about testing for your child.

Resources if you don't have a pediatrician:

- **Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital's Lead Treatment Program**  
Phone: 410-367-2222
- **Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Environmental Case Management Program**  
Phone: 1-866-703-3266

### What to Do if You Live in an Old House:

- Do not scrape, peel or pick at paint (lead paint could be buried far below the surface)
- Wash your hands often
- Do not "dry" sweep. Instead, use a wet mop
- Only use cold water from the tap for drinking
- Get the house tested: there are kits available at hardware stores to test for the presence of lead in your house or you can hire a professional
- Make sure all major home improvements are done by a person that is lead-safe certified

Rental properties built prior to 1978 **must** be inspected for lead. Ask your landlord for results or call the Lead Hotline at 410-537-4199.



## NUMBERS AT A GLANCE



**1 in 4** houses built between 1960 and 1977 have lead

Children with lead poisoning are:

**7** times more likely to drop out of school

**6** times more likely to enter the juvenile justice system



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UM Shore Regional Health  
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Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital

### RESOURCES:

Maryland Department of the Environment's Lead Poisoning Prevention Program:  
- 410-537-3825 or 1-800-633-6101, ext. 3825  
- Visit [mde.state.md.us/lead](http://mde.state.md.us/lead)

MDE Lead Hotline: 410-537-4199 or 800-776-2706

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Case Management Program:  
- 1-866-703-3266  
- Visit [bit.ly/MDLeadAsthmaHelp](http://bit.ly/MDLeadAsthmaHelp)



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