

# Michigan Environmental Health Association Fact Sheet

An Organization Of Professionals Dedicated To The Improvement Of Health Through The Management Of The Environment

[www.meha.net](http://www.meha.net)

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## Lead Poisoning

**Lead poisoning is silent. By the time there are symptoms, your child may have been harmed for life. If you live in a home built before 1978, learn to watch for lead hazards in your home. Lead dust is formed when old lead paint flakes, chips or peels. Children can be poisoned by lead dust which gets on their hands while they are playing.**

**Lead's effect in children if not detected early includes:**

1. Damage to the brain and nervous system
2. Behavior and learning problems such as hyperactivity
3. Slowed growth
4. Hearing problems
5. Headaches

**Lead from paint, dust, and soil can be dangerous if not managed properly.**

**FACT:** Lead exposure can harm young children and babies even before they are born.

**FACT:** Even children that seem healthy can have high levels of lead in their bodies.

**FACT:** People can get lead in their bodies by breathing or swallowing lead dust, or by eating soil or paint chips with lead in them.

**FACT:** People have many options for reducing lead hazards. In most cases, lead based paint that is in good condition is not hazardous.

**FACT:** Removing lead based paint improperly can increase the danger to your family.

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Lead Poisoning

**If you think your home has high levels of lead, here are some simple steps to protect your family:**

- Get your young children tested for lead, even if they seem healthy and especially if you live in an older home with loose or peeling paint. A simple blood test can detect high levels of lead. Contact your doctor or health center for more information.
- Wash children's hands, bottles, pacifiers, and toys often. Wash children's hands especially before they eat and before nap time and bed time.
- Make sure children eat healthy, low fat foods after age 2. Children with good diets high in calcium and iron absorb less lead.
- Get your home checked for lead hazards. Have a qualified certified lead inspector or risk assessor check for serious lead exposure (see the State of Michigan web page and toll free number below). The inspector can tell you what actions to take to address these hazards.
- Regularly clean floors, window sills, and other surfaces. Use a mop or sponge with warm water and an all purpose cleaner.
- Wipe soil off shoes before entering the house. Lead in soil can be a hazard when children play in soil or when people bring soil into the house on their shoes.
- Talk to your landlord about fixing surfaces with peeling or chipping paint. Peeling, chipping, cracking lead based paint is a hazard and needs immediate attention. Lead based paint may also be a hazard when found on surfaces that children can chew on, such as windows, doors, door frames, stairs, porches and fences.
- Take precautions to avoid exposure to lead dust when remodeling or renovating. Follow the safety measures in the brochure "Reducing Lead Hazards When Remodeling Your Home". This brochure is available from the National Lead Information Clearinghouse (see below for toll free number).
- Do not use a belt sander, propane torch, dry scraper or dry sandpaper on painted surfaces that may contain lead. These actions create large amounts of lead dust and fumes. Lead dust can remain in your home long after the work is done.
- Do not try to remove lead based paint yourself. To permanently remove lead hazards you should hire a certified contractor (see the State of Michigan phone number or web site below for a list).

**For more information call your local health department, or the State of Michigan toll free at 1-866-691-LEAD or the National Lead Information Clearinghouse at 1-800-424- LEAD. There is also a State of Michigan web site at [http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-2940\\_2955\\_2983---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-2940_2955_2983---,00.html).**