



Guidance for Families Living Near a Former Lead Smelter

Summary

Lead is commonly found in urban environments, especially in and around homes built before 1978—a time when lead-based paint was often used in homes. Former smelters may also add to the overall lead exposure in nearby neighborhoods if high levels of lead are found in the soil. Elevated blood lead levels caused by exposure to lead can harm your child's growth, behavior and ability to learn.

Get Your Children Tested

If you are concerned, talk to your doctor about getting a blood lead test. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends testing all children under 7 years old, especially children around the age of 1 and 2. A blood test can determine if elevated blood lead levels are present in your body. If elevated levels are found, your doctor can determine if additional treatment is necessary. Contact your family health care provider or call 1-800-440-LEAD for assistance.

Even small amounts of lead can be harmful to your child's health. Children are especially vulnerable and often do not show any signs or symptoms from lead poisoning.

Reduce Exposure to Lead in Soil

- Wash your child's hands after coming inside and before eating. Don't eat in the yard.
- Maintain a healthy level of grass sod on play areas. You can add clean soil or sod and apply compost every year. If possible, provide children with a covered sandbox.
- Ask family members to remove shoes and dirty clothing by the door. Safely store these items out of the reach of children. Wash soiled clothing and items before reusing.
- Damp dust and mop surfaces inside the home on a regular basis. If possible, use a vacuum with a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter on carpets. Vacuuming without this filter can increase the amount of lead-contaminated dust in the air.
- Wash toys and pacifiers with soap and water, especially those belonging to young children who put things in their mouth.

Reduce Exposure to Lead in Soil (continued)

- Watch your child for pica behavior (eating non-food substances such as dirt) and tell your doctor if symptoms appear.
- Wash your pet regularly and/or keep them away from soils high in lead.

Reduce Lead Contact When Gardening

- Wash vegetables and fruits carefully to remove soil, and peel all root crops. Discard the outer and older leaves of leafy vegetables.
- If soil lead is high, consider using raised beds filled with potting soil.
- Keep dust to a minimum by maintaining a moist soil and using mulch in the garden.
- Keep the soil pH between 6.5 and 7 to help reduce absorption into plants. In general, plants do not absorb or accumulate large amounts of lead, but when they do, the soils usually test acidic.

Eat a Healthy Diet

Foods high in iron and calcium can help prevent lead poisoning.

- For Iron - eat dried beans/peas, lean beef/pork, chicken/turkey, spinach, whole grain/fortified breads, eggs, tuna and collard greens
- For Calcium - eat cheese, milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, ice cream, milkshakes, pudding, cream soups, pizza, lasagna, macaroni and cheese

Feed children healthy snacks – a child with an empty stomach will absorb more lead.

Be Aware of Other Common Sources of Lead

- Lead-based paint is the number-one cause of childhood lead poisoning, especially in pre-1978 homes and in places where paint chips and turns into dust. Fix peeling paint and make home repairs safely. Never dry sand lead-based paint.
- People exposed to lead at work may bring lead home on their clothes, shoes, hair or skin. Some jobs that expose people to lead include: home improvement; painting and refinishing; car or radiator repair; plumbing; construction; welding and cutting; electronics; municipal waste incineration; lead compound manufacturing; manufacturing of rubber products, batteries and plastics; lead smelting and refining;

Be Aware of Other Common Sources of Lead (continued)

- Some hobbies also use lead, including making pottery or stained glass, and refinishing furniture. Hunters who make their own bullets or anglers who make their own fishing sinkers also use lead.
- Some folk medicines, ayurvedics and cosmetics contain lead. Always know what ingredients are in the products that you use.
- Lead can be found in inexpensive children's jewelry sold in vending machines and discount stores. Make sure that children do not put any jewelry in their mouth.
- Lead-glazed ceramics, china, pottery, crystal and non-glossy, vinyl mini-blinds may contain lead.

For More Information

Talk to your doctor, your local health department or the lead poisoning prevention program at 1-800-440-LEAD.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) will review environmental sampling results as they become available and make recommendations to protect the public's health. Contact Lora Werner of ATSDR at 215-814-3141 or Barbara Allerton at PADOH at 717-787-3350.

On the web:

- EPA fact sheet, "Identifying Lead Hazards in Residential Properties (2001)": <http://epa.gov/lead/pubs/403fs01.pdf>
- EPA fact sheet, "Identifying Lead Hazards in Your Home (1996)": <http://www.rst2.edu/ties/lead/university/resources/leadsuite/Manuals/3F403.pdf>
- Lead Prevention Tips from the Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips.htm
- PADOH Suspected Former Lead Smelter Fact Sheet : www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/environmental_health/14143/health_assessment_program/954979