

## Lead Precautions

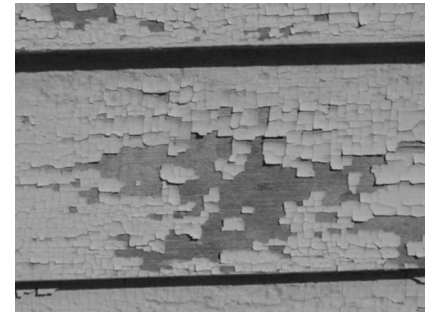
*Want to remodel or repaint, but think you may have lead paint in your home? Wondering what to do about it?*

We asked the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Consumer Products Safety Commission for advice.

### What is lead paint?

Lead was used as a pigment and drying agent in "alkyd" oil-based paint. Latex water based paints have generally not contained lead.

In 1978, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission lowered the legal maximum lead content in most kinds of paint to a trace amount. If your home was constructed before the 1980s, consider having it tested for lead before renovating or if the paint or underlying surface is deteriorating.



Flaking lead paint in "alligator" pattern  
[http://acc6.its.brooklyn.cuny.edu/~scitech/lead/lead\\_paint\\_house.jpg](http://acc6.its.brooklyn.cuny.edu/~scitech/lead/lead_paint_house.jpg)

### What's so dangerous about lead paint?

Lead-based paint is a major source of lead poisoning for children and can also affect adults. Lead poisoning in children can cause irreversible brain damage and can impair mental functioning.

### Where is lead paint found?

Most homes built before 1978 have some lead paint. Homes built before 1960 have the most lead paint. Lead paint can be present on any painted surface, but it is most often found on windows, trim, doors, railings, columns, porches and outside walls. Surfaces that have been repainted may have layers of lead paint underneath. A lead inspection can tell you where lead paint is located.

### What are the dangers of repainting or remodeling?

Disturbing lead paint by such things as sanding or scraping can release large amounts of toxic lead dust. The dust, which may not be visible, can settle on floors and other surfaces, where it gets on children's hands and into their mouths.

### What should I do if I have lead paint in my home?

You can help protect yourself by:

- Having the painted item replaced.
- Cover the lead-based paint with a sealant or gypsum wallboard. (This is not a long-term solution.)
- Have the lead-based paint removed by a professional contractor. Be sure the professionals contain the lead dust. Wet-wipe all surfaces to remove any dust or paint chips. Wet-clean the area before re-entry.
- Reduce lead dust exposure by periodically wet mopping and wiping surfaces and floors with a high phosphorous (at least 5%) cleaning solution. Wear waterproof gloves to prevent skin irritation. Avoid activities that will disturb or damage lead based paint and create dust.

<http://www.ineed2know.org/LeadPaintRemoval.htm>

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### Lead Safe St. Louis Contacts

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<http://stlcin.missouri.org/leadsafe/>

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### Lead – Programs: St. Louis

Lead poisoning is a serious problem in the City of St. Louis. Consequently, a wide range of programs and other resources have been developed to help citizens identify lead hazards and eliminate them before they become major health risks. These programs and resources are summarized below.

**Health Department - Lead Poisoning Prevention Program - Phone: (314) 612-5460**

The Health Department offers blood tests for children through daycare centers and health clinics in the City of St. Louis. If the tests show that the child has a high level of lead in his/her body, the Health Department will conduct an inspection of the home to test for lead hazards.

The Health Department defines a "high level of blood lead" as one that is above 20 micrograms for one test, or above 15 micrograms for two tests taken three months apart.

**Q: What happens if they find that my home is contaminated with lead?**

A: If lead contamination is found, your landlord or the building's owner will be required to correct the problem.

**Q: Do I have to pay for them to get the lead out of my home?**

A: Not always. If the property owners can show proof that they don't have the money and that they meet certain requirements they may be eligible to have the Health Department correct the problem at no cost to them.

Also, the city of St. Louis has begun a program of forgivable loans using \$1 million in federal money that will pay for lead removal in homes. The Mayor has proposed a new law that would raise an extra \$500,000 annually for loans.

**Q: Is there anyone else that I can contact with the city? What will they do?**

**City Building Division Home Inspection Program Phone: (314) 622-4671**The City's Building Division can do a visual inspection of your home for evidence of lead contamination. If inspectors find evidence of lead contamination they will turn it over to the Health Department for a more thorough inspection.

**HUD Lead Paint Grant - Community Development Administration (CDA)  
Phone: (314) 622-3400**

The CDA administers a \$2.9 million grant to be used for repairs in homes where there are children under the age of six. If an initial inspection reveals lead problems, the Health Department is notified and a more detailed inspection is conducted. If your home is selected to take part in this program the property owner then requests bids from licensed contractors. Working with CDA staff, the owner then selects a contractor to do the work.

For more information about City of St. Louis lead programs, contact Anath Boone at **Lead Safe St. Louis**, (314) 622-3400 ext. 376.

<http://stlc.in.missouri.org/ccrp/lead/stlouis.cfm>

## Lead – Identification

Do you have a lead problem in your home? It's not always easy to determine, but there are some things you can do to identify potential hazards.

**On-site evaluation:** Based on the age of your home and condition of the painted surfaces, you may be able to make some assumptions about the presence of lead in your home. However, the only sure way to identify lead sources in and around your home is to have a licensed lead inspector conduct an on site evaluation. You can make some assumptions based on the age of your home and condition of the painted surfaces.

**Paint:** Many homes built before 1978 have lead-based paint on both interior and exterior surfaces. Lead paint can also be found on older toys and furniture. The biggest threat from lead paint comes from fine lead dust created when doors, windows, or other painted surfaces rub against each other, which causes chipping or peeling of lead-based paint. Small children may find the taste of surfaces containing lead paint to be sweet to the taste. You should carefully monitor your children's hand to mouth activity whenever you know that lead-based paint exists in your home.

**Lead in the soil in your yard:** The areas where your child plays can be contaminated by lead-based paint chips and dust coming off exterior painted surfaces, especially in areas immediately adjacent to your home's exterior walls. It is also estimated that up to five million tons of lead emitted by leaded gasoline remains in the soil in areas adjacent to busy streets and highways. Another possible source of lead in the soil around your home is the past use of lead-based insecticides.

**Lead in water:** The water you bathe with, even the tap water you drink, may have lead in it. The source is most likely old lead water pipes and lead solder used for pipe connections.

**Lead in food:** If the food you eat was grown near a source of lead pollution, stored or baked in poorly glazed pottery, stored in leaded crystal, prepared by someone with lead on their hands, or packaged in cans with lead seams, it may be contaminated.

**Other possible lead sources:** Other sources of lead in and around your home may include

- Home remodeling projects
- Battery casings
- Some imported plastic blinds
- Dust and fumes from hobbies that use lead
- Fishing weights
- Lead from nearby industrial plants using or manufacturing lead
- Other sources that aren't as obvious.

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*Keep in mind that your vigilance and good common sense are ultimately the best tools you have to protect your loved ones from this lingering poison.*

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<http://stlc.in.missouri.org/ccrp/lead/identification.cfm>