

Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Yard

Information for communities near waste sites with possible lead contamination

One way lead can get into our bodies is by swallowing or breathing in soil that contains lead. Children can get lead in their bodies when they put their hands, toys, dirt, or other items in their mouths. When lead gets into our bodies, it can cause health problems. Checking your yard and home for lead, and your children's blood-lead levels, can reduce your concern about lead exposures.

HERE ARE SOME STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO LOWER THE AMOUNT OF LEAD THAT GETS INTO YOUR BODY.

Do not let children play in dirt that is contaminated with lead

- Have children play on grass or in areas covered with lead-free mulch, wood chips, or sand.
- Keep children from playing in bare dirt.
- Cover bare dirt with grass, bushes, or 4 to 6 inches of lead-free wood chips, mulch, soil, or sand.

Protect your family from lead-based paint in the yard

- Homes built before 1978 might still have lead-based paint on walls and trim. As paint ages, it can peel and chip away and become part of dust and soil.
- Keep your family, especially young children, away from areas outside your home where old paint might be peeling or chipping away, such as old porches, fences, or houses.
- **Do not** try to remove lead paint yourself unless you have been trained to follow lead-safe work practices. Hire a certified lead specialist who will follow lead-safe work practices. Visit the Environmental Protection Agency's [web page](#) to locate companies that do that work.



Keep children's hands and toys clean

- Wash children's hands, toys, pacifiers, and dishes frequently.
- Help your children keep their hands and toys away from their mouths. This includes when they are helping in the garden or playing in a sandbox.
- Check for recalls of toys that might have been contaminated with lead. Visit [recalls.gov](https://www.recalls.gov) to search for products that have been recalled.

Take other steps to reduce lead exposure

- Remove your shoes and wipe your feet on washable mats before entering your home.
- Wash pets regularly.
- When eating outdoors, try to eat in an area where there is no bare dirt.
- Some studies suggest that avoiding high fat foods such as french fries, hot dogs, and potato chips might help reduce absorption of lead in your body.

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Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home

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Knowing the possible sources of lead in your home makes it easier to manage and avoid exposures. Children are especially sensitive to lead. Knowing where your children play might help you protect them from exposure. Your home might look clean, but still might have lead inside. Children playing on the floor can swallow or breathe in dust and dirt that might contain lead. Exposure to lead can seriously harm children's health, even though they might not look or act sick.

Identify possible sources of lead

- **Lead-based paint in older homes, especially those built before 1978:** Paint on the inside or outside of a home or on furniture can chip, flake, and be ground into tiny bits (dust). Children can swallow or breathe in these paint pieces.
- **Soil and dust that contain lead:** Environmental sources of lead from urban or industrial areas, roads, former mining sites, smelting operations (current or past), or hazardous waste sites can be carried into your house on shoes, clothes, and pets. Children can swallow or breathe in this soil and dust.
- **Drinking water:** Lead can be in drinking water from a building's pipes, faucets, solder (especially in buildings built before 1985), lead service lines, or private wells.
- **Imported lead-glazed pottery, foreign candy, and jewelry:** These items from other countries can contain lead that could be harmful if swallowed.
- **Products recalled for lead contamination:** Some products, including toys, have been recalled because they are contaminated with lead. Visit [recalls.gov](https://www.fda.gov/recalls) to search for products that have been recalled.



Protect your family by following these simple steps

- **Assess for possible lead contamination**
 - If you live in a home built before 1978, get the paint tested for lead.
 - Get the dust in your home and your drinking water tested for lead.
 - Talk to your local health department if you need help finding resources for testing dust, drinking water, or paint for lead.
- **Keep your child's hands and toys clean**
 - Wash your child's hands after outside play and before meals, naps, and bedtime.
 - Wash your child's toys, bottles, and pacifiers often.
 - Teach your child not to put dirty hands and toys in their mouth.



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- **Be “lead safe”**
 - If your home was built before 1978, repair and remodel safely.
 - Before you paint, repair, or renovate, take “lead-safe” worker training to learn how to lower the amount of lead dust made while work is being done.
 - Hire a certified professional trained in lead-safe work practices.
 - If you or a family member work or do hobbies that involve lead, change clothing, remove shoes, and shower immediately when you come home or, if working or doing hobbies at home, take similar precautions
- **Clean your house often to remove lead tracked into the house from outside sources**
 - Clean your home weekly to keep it as dust free as possible.
 - Clean floors, windowsills, doorframes, and baseboards with soap and water.
 - Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter to trap lead dust. Vacuums without a HEPA filter can put more lead into the air.
- **Use washable rugs at all doors going into the house**
 - Take shoes off at the door or make sure everyone wipes their feet before entering the house.
 - Wash doormats, rugs, and cleaning rags often; be sure to wash them separately from clothing.
- **Eat healthy foods to reduce the risk for lead exposure and drink plenty of clean water**
 - Eat iron-rich foods
 - Lean red meats, fish, chicken, shellfish, and organ meats (e.g., liver)
 - Cereals high in iron and seeds (pumpkin seeds, quinoa)
 - Dried fruits, such as raisins or prunes
 - Spinach and legumes
 - Eat vitamin C-rich foods
 - Strawberries, kiwifruit, oranges, orange juice, grapefruits, grapefruit juice, and black currants
 - Tomatoes and tomato juice
 - Green peppers, broccoli, brussels sprouts, snow peas, and kale
 - Eat calcium-rich foods
 - Milk, yogurt, cheese, and other dairy products
 - Green leafy vegetables (spinach, kale, collard greens, etc.)
 - Legumes (beans, lentils, edamame, chickpeas, etc.)
 - Sardines, salmon, etc.
 - Some studies suggest that avoiding high fat foods such as french fries, hot dogs, and potato chips might help your body absorb less lead.
 - Use only cold tap water for drinking, cooking, and for making baby formula. Hot water from the faucet is more likely to contain lead. Run cold water 30 to 60 seconds before using to flush out impurities that might have leached from plumbing materials. Have your drinking water tested for lead.

LINKS TO OTHER RESOURCES:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Handbook: Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home (www.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-lead-your-home-english)
- EPA website: Protect Your Family from Sources of Lead (www.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-sources-lead)
- CDC's National Center for Environmental Health website: Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention (www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/)
- CDC's resource for lead in drinking water: www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/prevention/drinking-water.html

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Fight Lead Poisoning by Eating Healthy Foods

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Eating healthy foods can help slow down how the body takes in lead and help prevent lead poisoning. Lead poisoning can cause learning, hearing, and behavioral problems and can harm your child's brain. Some of these health effects can last a lifetime. Lead exposure is particularly harmful for children younger than 6 years of age because of their rapidly developing brain and frequent hand-to-mouth behavior. Here are some things you can do to fight lead poisoning.

PRACTICE THESE STEPS TO FURTHER PROTECT YOURSELF FROM LEAD

Ensure that you and your family regularly eat...

vitamin-C-rich foods,

- Strawberries, kiwifruit, oranges, orange juice, grapefruits, grapefruit juice, and black currants
- Tomatoes and tomato juice
- Green peppers, broccoli, brussels sprouts, snow peas, and kale

calcium-rich foods,

- Milk, yogurt, cheese, and other dairy products
- Green leafy vegetables (spinach, kale, collard greens, etc.)
- Legumes (beans, lentils, edamame, chickpeas, etc.)
- Sardines, salmon, etc.

iron-rich foods,

- Cereals high in iron and seeds (pumpkin seeds, quinoa)
- Dried fruits, such as raisins or prunes
- Spinach and legumes
- Lean red meats, fish, chicken, shellfish, and organ meats (e.g., liver)

and routinely feed your child these healthy foods.

- Feed your child three healthy meals a day and healthy snacks. Children with empty stomachs may absorb more lead.



EXPOSURES

- Wash hands before preparing and eating food.
- Wash fruits and vegetables well, discard outer leaves of leafy vegetables, and peel root vegetables, such as carrots.
- Limited studies suggest that avoiding high fat foods such as french fries, hot dogs, and potato chips might help your body absorb less lead.
- Bake or broil food instead of frying.
- Use only clean cold water for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula. Hot water from the faucet is more likely to contain lead. Run cold water 30 to 60 seconds before using to flush out impurities that might have gotten into the water from plumbing materials.
- Do not store food in glazed pottery from other countries. If contaminated, the glaze might release lead into the food.

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Safe Gardening in Lead-Contaminated Soils

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Lead exposure from eating fruits or vegetables grown in soil that contains lead can be a major health risk, especially to children. Lead in dirt and dust can coat the surface of fruits or vegetables and could be taken up into fruits and vegetables themselves. Protect your health, and learn how to lower your risk for lead exposure with the tips below:

FOLLOW GOOD GARDENING PRACTICES

- Wash your hands immediately after gardening.
- Give preference to growing fruiting plants (tomatoes, corn, etc.).
- Maintain a soil pH of 6.5 to 7 to reduce plant uptake of lead.
- Keep soil moist and use barriers (such as 2–4 inches of mulch) on and around your garden to reduce soil and dust migration.
- Add organic materials (such as peat moss or manure) to your soil. These bind the lead in soil so that vegetables absorb less lead.
- Use [raised beds](#) for gardening.



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CLEAN YOUR PRODUCE

- Wash and scrub fruits and vegetables with a brush to help remove bits of soil and dust.
- Peel or skin root crops such as carrots, potatoes, turnips, and onions before eating them.
- Discard the outer leaves of leafy vegetables (lettuce, cabbage, brussels sprouts, etc.).

GET YOUR CHILD TESTED

- Most children poisoned by lead do not act or look sick.
- The best way to know if your child has lead poisoning is to have their blood tested.
- All Medicaid-enrolled children should be tested for lead at ages 12 and 24 months or between ages 24–72 months if they have not previously been tested.
- Children not enrolled in Medicaid should be tested if they are at-risk for lead poisoning.
- Call your healthcare provider or clinic today to get your child tested for lead poisoning.

Interested in learning more on good gardening practices?

Attend a soilSHOP! [The soil Screening, Health, Outreach, and Partnership Program \(soilSHOP\)](#) is a community event that provides free lead soil screenings and one-on-one health education. These events help you learn how to prevent harmful lead exposures. Contact your local health department or ATSDR regional office agency to learn of events near you.



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