

# LEAD POISONING

Lead poisoning occurs when the body is exposed to a large amount of lead OR continuous small amounts of lead



## Risk Factors for Children

- Children under the age of six are at the highest risk for lead poisoning because:
- They have a great deal of hand-to-mouth contact that can bring lead directly into their bodies.
- Young children play around window sills, walls, railings, and dirt that may contain lead-based paint
- They are at a critical developmental stage in their lives and lead negatively affects their growth and development
- Lead poisoning can cause severe health, learning and behavioral problems in children

## Health Risks

### Symptoms:

- Lack of attention
- Learning difficulties
- Lack of coordination
- Speech difficulties
- Hearing impairment
- Lack of energy
- Growth problems
- Hyperactivity
- Irritability
- Loss of appetite
- Constipation
- Change in sleep patterns



### Severe symptoms:

- Kidney damage
- High blood pressure
- Brain Damage
- Damage to reproductive organs

*Note:* Many people with high levels of lead do not appear to be sick. Also, these symptoms can be a result of other causes. To determine if your child has lead poisoning, have a blood test done.

## Testing

- ◆ A blood test is the only way to determine if a child has lead poisoning.
- ◆ Children six years and younger should be tested on an annual basis if they meet any of the following criteria:
  - Live or play in houses built before the 1980's
  - Live with a person who is exposed to lead at work or through a hobby
  - Live or play around an older home that is being remodeled

## Resources

### *Lead Screening*

The health department offers free blood tests to children under the age of six

### *Risk Assessment for your Home*

You can have the paint in your home tested for lead by the health department. This is a free service. Also, the staff is available to help you with questions and concerns about the results of the tests.

## Prevention

- ◆ Find and remove sources of lead in the home such as lead paint
- ◆ A balanced diet high in calcium, iron, and vitamin C is important in helping your child's body absorb less lead.

Recommended Foods:

### *Calcium-rich*

- Milk
- Yogurt
- Low-fat cheese
- Tofu
- Cottage cheese



### *Vitamin C-rich*

- Oranges
- Broccoli
- Grapefruit
- Green leafy vegetables



### *Iron-rich*

- Raisins
- Low-fat pork
- Iron-fortified cereal
- Lean red meat
- Dried beans peas



Avoid foods high in fats and oils because they help the body absorb lead more easily

## Sources of Lead

- Lead-based paint is the main source. It can be found in:
  - Homes built before the 1980's
  - Older or Imported toys
  - Older, painted furniture
  - Dust from worn paint
- Soil contaminated with paint chips
- Lead solder on pipes can contaminate water
- Brass keys and faucets
- People exposed to lead at work bring it home on their clothes and bodies



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# Lead Poisoning and Your Child

