

# Lead Poisoning Prevention Fact Sheet

## What is lead?

Lead is a heavy metal naturally found in the Earth's crust. It is an element that does not break down in the environment and is very hard to clean up. Lead can be found in the air, soil, water, and even inside our homes. Our exposure to lead is from past and current human activity.



## Where can lead be found?

Lead-based paint was used in homes built before 1978. When lead-based paint peels and cracks it makes lead dust that can land on surfaces nearby. Lead is also found in older water pipes, in plumbing material and in many other products such as ceramics, ammunition, solder, folk remedies and cosmetics, some toy products and toy jewelry, some keys, fishing sinkers, some candies, and batteries.



## What is lead poisoning?

Lead poisoning is an illness that occurs when someone swallows or inhales lead. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines childhood lead poisoning as 10µg/dL or more of lead within the body at the time of screening. Lead can be harmful to anyone. No amount of lead in the blood is considered safe.



## Who is affected by lead?

### • Children

Children under the age of 6 are the most vulnerable to lead. Their growing bodies absorb more lead than adults. A child's brain and nervous system is more sensitive to the damaging health effects of lead. Children become poisoned because they put their hands and other objects in their mouths that may contain lead dust. They may also be exposed to lead by eating food and/or drinking water that contain lead.

### • Pregnant Women and Unborn Children

Pregnant women can pass lead to her unborn child in the womb. Lead is also released from the mother's bones along with the calcium that can pass to the fetus or breastfeeding infant.

### • Adults working with lead

Adults working in a job or engaging in hobbies where lead is used, such as making stained glass, using certain folk remedies containing lead, working in a battery plant, renovating and repairing older homes that disturb lead-based paint may breathe in lead dust that accumulates in the body over time.

