

Lead

In the 1950s, widespread use of lead in gasoline, house paint, and food cans resulted in high levels of lead in the blood for most Americans and many cases of lead poisoning in children. Fortunately, the average blood lead levels of children and adults have markedly decreased since lead has been eliminated from these products. The bad news is that lead containing products are still around. Scientists are identifying health effects from very low levels of lead in the blood of children.

The biggest source of lead exposure in children continues to be house paint containing lead. This type of paint was removed from the market in 1978. The typical exposure scenario involves an older infant or toddler pulling up to a windowsill and eating chips of lead based paint. House dust in an older home may also contain lead. Lead is sometimes present in imported jewelry, folk remedies, and Mexican pot/pottery.

If your child has any risk factors for lead poisoning, such as living or attending daycare in an older home, eating from a Mexican pot/pottery, or using folk remedies, your pediatrician should order a blood test to determine blood lead levels when your child is about 12 and 24 months of age. Be aware of any unusual hobbies in your family, such as making lead bullets or lead sinkers, lead glazed pottery, or other art activities with lead, that might increase your child's risk of exposure. If you have any concerns about lead, bring them up with your child's pediatrician.

Resources (Accessed 9/23/05)*:

Homeowner and Realtor Information about Sources of Lead from the Texas Department of State Health Services

<http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/beh/lead/HOMEOWN.HTM>

“Protect Your Family From Lead in Your Home”, by the Consumer Product Safety Commission

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/426.html>

Lead: Environmental Health Resources for Community Outreach and Education, from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

<http://www-apps.niehs.nih.gov/outreach%2Deducation/Resources/HTlead.cfm>

* If the addresses listed above are no longer valid, try searching the internet by the title of the document and/or author