

# Lead Exposure in Children



There is **no safe level** of lead exposure.



The most important treatment for lead exposure is to **remove the source of lead.**



Lead exposure is **avoidable.**

## What is lead and where is it found?

Protecting a child from exposure to lead is important for their **lifelong health**. Lead is a metal that has been used throughout history to make products such as pipes, paint, and cosmetics. **While the use of lead has decreased over the years due to the health risks, lead is still found in many places, including:**



Dust, paint, and paint chips, especially in old homes built before 1978.



Ammunition, guns, and shooting ranges.



Soil around old homes, near roadways, airports, and soil contaminated well water.



Old water pipes and plumbing.



Imported candy, herbs, spices, and cosmetics.



Dishware and art, such as, stained glass and pottery.



Imported natural remedies and ceremonial substances.



Jewelry and metal trinkets.

## Why is this concerning?

While lead exposure usually has no symptoms, it may still be damaging and have **lifelong impacts**. The long-term effects of lead exposure include behavior problems, learning difficulties, and poor performance in school. Lead exposure has also been associated with conditions like dental cavities, constipation, and anemia. Some conditions may be immediate and some are slow to appear but last through a lifetime.

## How can your doctor help?

- Contact your doctor if you believe your child has been exposed to lead.
- If your child's blood lead test results are high, your doctor should continue to follow up with regular lead testing to make sure the levels go down.
  - Lead exposure can occur with other health conditions, your doctor may want to do more testing.
  - Your primary care provider can also educate you on the importance of good nutrition, enriching educational programs, and on-going monitoring for the development of the adverse effects of lead exposure throughout your child's development.
  - To educate yourself further, please review the health education resources available on the Kansas Department of Health and Environment ([KDHE](#)), and Mid-America Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit ([MAPEHSU](#)) websites for guidance. Click the links or scan the QR codes below.

## How can you reduce lead exposure in a home that contains lead paint dust?

**Lead-based paint dust is the most common source of lead exposure. This is most common in homes built before 1978. Reducing your child's exposure to lead can be as simple as changing how you clean your home.**

- Dust in the home should be carefully cleaned with a damp cloth and mop. The MAPEHSU website has more information on safe cleaning practices.
- Remove shoes at the door. If anyone in the house works where there is possible lead exposure, they should leave work clothes and shoes at work or wash them separately. They should consider bathing before holding children to wash away lead dust.
- Avoid doing home renovations yourself. These cause lead dust which is harmful to adults and children.
- Ensure everyone washes their hands before eating.
- If you live in a home built before 1978 and your child has elevated blood lead levels, contact your healthcare provider for blood lead monitoring and lead poisoning medical care management recommendations.
- If you live in public housing and have a child with elevated blood lead levels, you may be [legally entitled](#) to a lead home assessment. Contact your local PHA or PHA representative directly for more information.

## What else can you do?

**Other healthy behaviors are also useful to prevent the concerning effects of lead exposure.**

- Make sure your child eats a well-balanced diet with calcium and iron. Calcium and iron help lower the amount of lead absorbed into the body. Ask your doctor about state and local food assistance resources such as SNAP and WIC.
- [Head Start](#), [Kansas Infant-Toddler Services](#), and other early education programs may help your child succeed. Ask your doctor for resources.
- The whole family should get at least one hour of physical activity daily.
- Smoking and vaping are harmful to you and your children. Smoking can lead to many health issues. For resources to quit smoking you can call 1-800-QUITNOW.

Mid-America Pediatric  
Environmental Health  
Specialty Unit



For more information,  
visit our websites!



Kansas Childhood Lead  
Poisoning Prevention Program

### References

- Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention. (2012, January 4). Low level lead exposure harms children: A renewed call for primary prevention [PDF]. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/ACCLPP/Final\\_Document\\_030712.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/ACCLPP/Final_Document_030712.pdf)
- American Academy of Pediatrics. (2017, August 30). Blood lead levels in children: What parents need to know. HealthyChildren.org. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Blood-Lead-Levels-in-Children-What-Parents-Need-to-Know.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020a, April 7). Sources of Lead. Childhood Lead Poisoning and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/sources.htm>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020b, October 9). How much physical activity do children need? CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/children/index.htm>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, March 19). Childhood lead poisoning prevention program. CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/default.htm>
- Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units. (2013). Recommendations on Medical Management of Childhood Lead Exposure and Poisoning [PDF]. <https://doi.org/https://www.pehsu.net/Library/facts/medical-mgmt-childhood-lead-exposure-June-2013.pdf>
- Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units. (2016). PEHSU Factsheet on Lead and Drinking Water: Information for Health Professionals Across the United States (2016) [PDF].