Pregnancy and Lead Poisoning

Lead and Your Baby

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Lead can pass to babies during pregnancy

Lead is a metal that hurts the brain, kidneys, and nervous system of children. If a woman is exposed to lead during pregnancy, it may affect her baby. She can breathe in or swallow lead before or during her pregnancy. High levels of lead during pregnancy can increase the risk of miscarriage. It can cause babies to be born too small or too early and have learning or behavior problems. Breastfeeding is still recommended unless the mother's blood lead level is so high that it would put the baby at risk. A blood test is the only way to know how much lead is in your body.

Lead poisoning can be prevented. Protect yourself and your baby while you are pregnant and after your baby is born.

Contact the Vermont Department of Health or ask your OB/GYN for a FREE home lead dust wipe kit.

How Can I Protect My Baby Before Birth?

Maintain your home in good condition and reduce lead dust in homes built before 1978:

- Use only a vacuum with a HEPA filter, and vacuum slowly.
- Wet mop floors instead of sweeping.
- Use disposable towels to wet clean window sills and other surfaces.
- Leave shoes at the door to prevent tracking soil that contains lead into the house.
- Install window well inserts to provide a smooth cleaning surface.
- Cover or paint over chipped, peeling, or cracked paint.

Renovate and repair with these lead-safe work practices in homes built before 1978:

- Wet sand and wet scrape to reduce lead dust from being released into the air.
- Do not remove paint while you are pregnant.

Eat healthy foods and wash hands often:

- Fruits, vegetables, and dairy products high in iron, calcium, and vitamin C protect your body and your baby from lead.
- Always wash your hands before preparing and eating food. Lead dust found around your home can get onto your hands.

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Lead in Your Environment

Beware of lead hazards at home and at work

Lead Paint

Dust from lead paint is the major source of lead poisoning in Vermont. Lead was banned from house paint in 1978. Homes built before then likely contain lead. Adults and children can be exposed to lead during renovation projects or from chipped, peeling, or cracked paint. You can breathe in or swallow the lead dust.

Always use lead-safe practices when renovating or repairing your home. If you rent a home or apartment built before 1978, your landlord must fix chipping and peeling paint in a lead-safe way.

Soil

Lead dust may be found in soil from lead paint that flakes off the outside of buildings and from car exhaust when lead was in gasoline. Plant vegetable and other food gardens in lead-free soil and at least three feet from buildings and away from busy streets or highways.

Drinking Water

Lead may get into your drinking water from lead pipes, plumbing fixtures, or solder. Run water until it is as cold as it can get for cooking, drinking, and making baby formula.

Lead May be Found in:

- Materials from jobs and hobbies like stained glass, artist painting, and making fishing weights and bullets
- Dishes made of ceramics, crystal, glazed pottery (like bean pots), and metal pots with lead solder (samovars)
- Imported products from other countries such as jewelry, medallions and charms, canned goods, candy (especially from Mexico), cosmetics, and natural remedies
- Salvaged materials from buildings built before 1978 such as window frames, doors, lumber, and siding
- Antique items like painted tin panels, hardware, jewelry, toys, and furniture
- Venison and small game harvested with lead bullets and lead shots