Lead Hazards in Housing

Guidance • Support • Prevention • Protection

Lead Poisoning

Lead poisoning is a serious but *preventable* health problem. Lead is highly toxic and can cause permanent neurological damage to children including learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and decreased intelligence.

Adults also suffer adverse health effects from lead, including increased blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, anemia, impaired renal function, thyroid dysfunction, and cancer. In addition, pregnant women are at risk for miscarriage, early delivery and low birth-weight babies. Men are at risk for decreased fertility.

Lead Paint in Housing Built before 1978

In Vermont, children are most often lead poisoned from lead dust, either by eating it when they put their hands or objects in their mouths or by breathing it in. Adults can be exposed to lead during renovation projects or whenever lead paint is improperly sanded, scraped or burned.

The most common source of lead dust is from lead paint in houses built before 1978. Lead dust is created by normal daily activities such as opening and closing doors or windows that were originally painted with lead paint. In 1978, lead was banned in house paint. Most homes built before that year still contain lead. Even when the home has been repainted since 1978, the action of opening and closing doors and windows can release lead dust from the original paint into the home.

Lead in Soil and Water

Other sources of lead hazards are soil and water. Soil may contain lead from lead paint that flakes off the outside of buildings and from car exhaust from the days of leaded gasoline. Soil may be contaminated along the side of older homes and near roadways. This soil can be tracked into the house. Even newer homes may be on lots with lead-contaminated soil. To prevent lead poisoning, children should never play in bare soil.

Drinking water may contain lead from old lead pipes, plumbing fixtures, or solder. Always run the water until it is cold to use for cooking, drinking, and making baby formula. Lead pipes should be replaced.

Vermont Law Requires Lead-Safe Work Practices

The Vermont Lead Law was passed in 1996 and updated in 2008 (18 VSA Chapter 38). The law is designed to protect children and families from lead hazards.

Under the law, all paint in pre-1978 housing is presumed to be lead-based, unless a licensed lead inspector or lead risk assessor has determined that it is lead-free. The law prohibits certain work practices and requires other work practices when disturbing more than 1 square foot of paint in pre-1978 housing.

OVER

VERMONT

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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healthvermont.gov

Prohibited, unsafe work practices include removing paint by:

- Open flame burning or torching
- Use of heat guns operated above 1,100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Dry scraping
- Machine sanding or grinding
- Uncontained hydro-blasting or high-pressure washing
- Abrasive blasting or sandblasting without containment and high-efficiency particulate exhaust controls

Required, safe work practices include:

- Limiting access to interior and exterior work areas
- Enclosing interior work areas with plastic sheathing or other effective lead dust barrier
- Using protective clothing
- Misting painted surfaces before disturbing paint
- Wetting paint debris before sweeping to limit dust creation

Other Sources of Lead

Children can get lead poisoning from sources other than lead paint. Many products may contain lead.

Lead in workplaces or parent's clothes from:

- Construction and renovation work
- Auto repair and work with batteries
- Plumbing
- Places where people do welding or soldering

Lead in handmade pots and dishes

- Glazed pottery, like bean pots
- Metal pots with lead solder (samovars)

Lead in products

- Toy jewelry made in other countries
- Toys made in other countries
- Imported candy, especially from Mexico
- Imported make-up and home remedies

Lead in some crafts and sports

- Stained glass
- Bullets
- Fishing sinkers

Check with the Consumer Product Safety Commission regularly for recalled products that are lead hazards. www.cpsc.gov

Resources

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Vermont Department of Health
800-439-8550
http://healthvermont.gov

Lead Hazard Reduction Program
Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
(802) 828-3250 or 800-290-0527
http://www.leadsafevermont.org

Lead Hazard Reduction Program
City of Burlington
(802) 865-5323
http://www.cedoburlington.org

US Environmental Protection Agency
http://www.epa.gov/lead

US Housing and Urban Development
http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/index.cfm

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