



# Loss Control Insight

## LEAD POISONING

### Beware of Lead

Your home could poison your child or children who visit it. If your house was built before 1978, it may have lead-based paint; if it was built before 1960 it almost certainly does. Children are more susceptible to lead poisoning and experience more severe damage but, adults with an elevated blood level can suffer reproductive problems, high blood pressure and hypertension, nerve disorders, memory and concentration problems and muscle and joint pain.



**“Ooooooh... I was wondering why a water bucket was labeled ‘hazardous chemical’...”**

Lead is highly toxic. Exposure to it can be dangerous, especially for children who are 6 or younger. But lead is also stable and easy to work with, so it has been used for many purposes even in our homes. The symptoms of lead poisoning are subtle, not apparent; the only way to tell if there is lead poisoning is to have a blood test.

The main sources of dust are deteriorated paint, paint in high friction areas (such as windows and doors), and lead soil tracked in from outdoors. Remodeling activities that disturb paint will create dust that will create a hazard.

Lead dust in your home and lead in bare soil are the primary sources of lead poisoning. Children playing on the floor get lead dust or contaminated soil on their toys, blankets, clothes and on their hands that gets into their mouths. The lead dust may be invisible. The amount of dust Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers unsafe for kids is equal to a small packet of sweetener sprinkled over an area one third the size of a football field.

The only way to know for sure if your house has lead hazards is to have a lead risk assessment performed by a trained and licensed professional, or a clearance examination after work that disturbs lead-based paint has been done. Otherwise, assume old paint contains lead and take precautions accordingly.

If you are hiring a contractor to do work that will disturb paint, make sure to ask them what they will do to protect your family from lead dust. If they say it's not a problem, don't hire them. Ask questions to make sure they know how to work with lead paint safely, and that they will have an independent clearance examination after the work is done to confirm that the house meets federal standards for lead.

The reality is that every living creature is exposed to small amounts of lead through household dust, food, drinking water, air, soil, and a variety of consumer products. All we can do to protect ourselves against lead poisoning is to minimize our exposure to it.