

# Understanding Lead Poisoning

## What is Lead Poisoning?

Lead poisoning is caused by swallowing or breathing lead. Lead is poison when it gets into the body.

Lead can stay in the body for a long time. Young children absorb lead more easily than adults. The harm done by lead does not go away. Lead in the body can:

- Hurt the brain, kidneys, and nervous system
- Slow down growth and development
- Make it hard to learn
- Damage hearing and speech
- Cause behavior problems

## How will I know if my child has lead poisoning?

Most children who have lead poisoning do not look or act sick. A lead test is the only way to know if your child has lead poisoning. Ask your healthcare provider to test your child for lead.

Some children may have:

- Upset stomach
- Trouble eating or sleeping
- Headache
- Trouble paying attention

## How do children get lead poisoning?

Most of the lead poisoning in Ohio comes from deteriorating lead paint and its resulting lead dust. Many homes built before 1978 have lead paint on the inside and outside of the building.

When old paint peels and cracks, it creates lead paint chips and lead dust. Lead dust also comes from opening and closing old windows.

Home repairs and renovations also create lead dust.

Lead dust lands on the floor. Lead gets into a child's body when he puts his hands and toys in his mouth. Children can also breathe in lead dust. Children between the ages of 9 months and 6 years are at risk, but toddlers who are teething and learning and crawl are most at risk.

## Common myths about lead poisoning

Thanks to scientific research we know a lot more about lead than we used to. However, there are still many myths about lead poisoning. Below are the most common myths that prevent children from being properly protected from lead.

<p><b>Myth</b> - Children have to eat paint chips or chew on painted surfaces to get lead poisoning.</p>	<p><b>Fact</b> - Ingesting dust from lead paint is the most common way of getting lead poisoning. Lead dust covers surfaces and objects that children touch and clings to their hands and toys. Children swallow lead dust when they put their hands or toys in their mouths, which is normal behavior for young children.</p> <p>Eating chips or chewing on painted surfaces can also poison children.</p>
<p><b>Myth</b> - Only children with very high levels of lead in their blood are permanently impaired.</p>	<p><b>Fact</b> - Even low levels of lead in a child's blood may have long-term effects on learning and behavior.</p>
<p><b>Myth</b> - Only children in the inner city are in danger of getting lead poisoning.</p>	<p><b>Fact</b> - Lead poisoning crosses all racial, geographic, and economic lines. Lead paint can be in any home built before 1978.</p>
<p><b>Myth</b> - Only children living in poorly maintained or poorly cleaned homes are lead poisoned.</p>	<p><b>Fact</b> - Poor maintenance and cleaning habits do increase the risk of childhood lead poisoning. But, good maintenance and cleaning habits alone will not fully protect a child. Lead dust cannot be fully removed by normal household cleaning.</p> <p>Children are most often poisoned by lead dust created over time through normal wear and tear and repairs or renovations. Even if cleaned, lead dust continues to be generated by activities such as opening and closing windows and doors.</p>
<p><b>Myth</b> - Poor parental supervision is to blame for lead poisoning.</p>	<p><b>Fact</b> - Even well supervised children are lead poisoned. Lead poisoning frequently occurs when children put their hands, toys, and other objects in their mouths.</p>
<p><b>Myth</b> - It is more hazardous to delead than to leave lead in place. Disturbing lead paint creates dust and makes the problem worse.</p>	<p><b>Fact</b> - During deleading, lead hazards can be controlled by a licensed deleader trained to use safe techniques and proper cleanup methods. Lead inspectors check deleading work and take dust wipes to make sure the dust is cleaned.</p>
<p><b>Myth</b> - A child who appears healthy, active, and lacks symptoms is not lead poisoned.</p>	<p><b>Fact</b> - Children who seem perfectly normal and healthy may still be lead poisoned. Damage to the brain and nervous system can</p>

	<p>be subtle and very difficult to detect without a medical exam. The effect of lead poisoning may not be noticeable until the child enters school.</p>
<p><b>Myth</b> - Lead poisoning is not a real problem. Many people grew up in homes with lead paint and are perfectly healthy.</p>	<p><b>Fact</b> - Since Ohio did not always routinely test for lead poisoning, many people may have been affected.</p> <p>Many people who have grown up in homes with lead paint may have experienced subtle damage to the brain and nervous system. There are no symptoms of moderate lead poisoning, so no one would know they were in danger.</p> <p>A significant number of these people may experience undiagnosed lead poisoning. Learning, behavior, and attention problems are all effects of lead poisoning. Lead paint becomes more dangerous as it ages. Old paint is more likely to chip, peel, chalk and create lead dust and debris. It poses more health hazards. As a result, the lead paint in old buildings is more dangerous, even if it has been painted over.</p>