



Department of Health
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October 25-31, 2009 is National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

Lead is a major environmental threat for children in New York State. Lead is especially dangerous for young children, where it can cause problems with a child's growth, behavior, and ability to learn. Lead can also harm babies before they are born.

Most childhood lead poisoning is caused by lead dust from old, peeling lead paint in buildings built before 1978. This, often invisible, lead dust settles on toys, windowsills and floors. A child can get lead poisoning by swallowing or breathing in lead or lead dust. Only a small amount of lead is needed to harm a young, growing child. "Lead is especially dangerous for young children. Young children spend a lot of time on the floor, and they put hands, toys, and other things in their mouth," said Susanne Smith Deputy Director of the Otsego County Department of Health.

If you have young children, Susanne Smith recommends the following to help protect them from lead in their environment: Assume any home built before 1978 contains lead paint. Keep all painted surfaces in good condition. Keep babies and children away from any peeling, chipped paint. Before you repair peeling paint or do home renovations, call the Otsego County Department of Health at 607-547-4230 to find out how to paint and repair safely, to keep dust levels down. It's very important to keep the home from filling up with lead dust. Pregnant women and children should stay away from home repairs.

If you rent a home built before 1978, ask your landlord to repair any peeling paint safely. If the landlord is not responsive, you can call your local building inspector or code enforcement listed in the phone book government blue pages.

Wash your children's hands, face, toys, bottles, and pacifiers often. Feed your children foods that have calcium, iron, and Vitamin C. If your child breathes in or swallows lead, these foods will help lower the amount of lead that stays in your child's blood.

If you have a job or hobby that involves working with lead, you should shower and change clothes and shoes before going home. Wash work clothes separately from other clothes.

Lead has been found in Mexican, Indian, and Middle Eastern pottery, painted china, leaded glass, crystal and pewter. These should not be used to serve or store food. High levels of lead have also been found in some Ayurvedic medicines, kohl, surma, greta, and azarcon.

Most children with lead poisoning do not look or feel sick. The only way to know if a child has lead poisoning is to get a blood lead test. In New York State, health care providers are required to test all children for lead at age one year, and again at age two years.

For more information on how to prevent childhood lead poisoning, call the Otsego County Department of Health at 607-547-4230 or visit the New York State Department of Health web site at: www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/lead.

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