

# Lead and Safe Play



## Hygiene & Safe Play

Lead can be found in the most unlikely places. Whether it is on the paint of a child's toy or in the dirt they play on outside, lead can be present in places you don't expect. Children are especially at risk for lead exposure because they often put their hands and objects in their mouths, and they aren't known for the best hand hygiene practices. Though the potential for lead exposure is intimidating, there are simple actions you can take to ensure safe play for your family.

- **Vacuum and dust frequently:** Limiting dust particles on the ground and in the air of your home can decrease your child's exposure to lead. Lead hides in small dust particles, and your child can breathe them in the air or become exposed through physical contact. For example, if your child is playing on dusty ground, they will likely put their hands in their mouth before washing their hands. Vacuuming and dusting with a damp mop or sponge at least once a week can decrease the likelihood of lead exposure.
- **Don't play in the dirt:** Lead can be present in the dirt near homes and when children play in this environment, the likelihood of exposure increases. You can plant shrubs, bushes, trees, or grass over bare dirt to decrease the potential for exposure.
- **Remove shoes before entering your home:** Wearing shoes in your house tracks particles that could contain lead. By placing your family and visitor's shoes in a specific area before entering, you can decrease the amount of lead tracked into your home.
- **Wash hands and toys:** Toddlers put everything in their mouths. Whether it is their hands or toys, you must be sure to wash them frequently with soap and water to decrease exposure. You especially want to be sure to wash your child's hands before they eat.
- **Avoid areas with peeling/chipping paint:** The paint in your home can possess lead. It is common for chipping paint on old porches and windows to contain lead. Avoid these areas and cover them with duct tape until the paint can be safely removed.
- **Watch for common household objects:** Common household objects like imported spices, make-up, or jewelry contain lead and when a child puts them in their mouth, they can become exposed.
- **Avoid dusty areas:** Don't let your child play in areas that may contain more dust, like attics and basements.
- **Encourage a well-balanced diet:** A diet rich in calcium, iron and vitamin C can decrease lead absorption, and so can vitamins supplements containing these elements. Snacks like peanut butter, cheese, iron-fortified cereal, and oranges are some options that can decrease children's absorption of lead.
- **Watch for signs of Pica:** Pica is an eating disorder in which a person eats things not usually considered food. If your child is eating nonfood items like dirt or chalk, they might have PICA which can cause lead poisoning. If you notice your child is eating substances that are not food, please follow up with your pediatrician.

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