



Dangers of Lead Paint Safety Talk

Many people have at least heard that old paint can contain lead that can be harmful, but many do not know how or why it is. The lead found in old paint is considered inorganic lead. Inorganic lead compounds are classified as "probably carcinogenic to humans" by the **International Agency of Research on Cancer** also known as IARC. A **carcinogen** is defined as any substance or agent that tends to produce a cancer.

What is Lead and How Are We Exposed?

The **CDC defines lead** as, "Lead is a soft, blue-gray metal. Lead occurs naturally, but much of its presence in the environment stems from its historic use in paint and gasoline and from ongoing or historic mining and commercial operations." Lead is found in abundance in our environment and because of this it is traceable in most people's bodies today. The most common route of exposure occurs primarily through ingestion and the second common route is inhalation. Deteriorating lead paint is the biggest source of elevated levels of lead in the blood in children.

The Effects of Overexposure to Lead (source: [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov))

Lead toxicity can affect every organ system. It is impossible to list off all of the effects here. Some quick facts about the effects on health due to lead toxicity:

- The nervous system is the most sensitive target
- Can cause depression and mood changes
- Inhibits the body's ability to make hemoglobin
- Causes severe cramping abdominal pain in cases of serious overexposure
- Can contribute to hypertension
- Creates more adverse pregnancy outcomes

Visit the CDC website for a list of all possible health effects of lead exposure.

Best Practices to Reduce Exposure to Lead Paint

Lead-based paints were banned for use in housing in 1978, but are still remain today in older homes and in workplaces. Some basic best practices to reduce exposure to lead from old paint:

- Assume paint in older homes or older workplaces contain lead unless tests show otherwise.
- Have lead paint removed or sealed by a professional especially if it is flaking or chipping.
- Do not disturb old paint. Creating dust or breaking off flakes can increase the likelihood of the lead being inhaled or ingested.
- Clean children's toys and play areas often.



- Wet mop floors and wipe down window sills. Lead dust can collect on these areas.

Summary

It is important to understand where lead is found in our environment and the health effects related to overexposure. Often times many people develop an illness, but it is misdiagnosed by a doctor or disregarded by the individual altogether. If you suspect you, or a loved one, is suffering from lead poisoning talk with your doctor. Blood tests are available that can determine the amount of lead in a person's blood.