

Nationwide, **Lead** remains in approximately 74 % of all housing built before 1978. It was commonly added to house paint until 1978 when the Consumer Product Safety Commission restricted the amount of lead added to household paint.

The chipping, peeling or chalking of lead paint is a common source of lead dust. Fine lead dust, is created when painted surfaces rub against each other, such as where windows or doors open and close. This lead paint dust gathers on floors, carpeting and windowsills. This dust is then easily collected on hands, feet, skin, and ingested by infants, children and adults. Lead paint dust is the most common source of lead exposure for children. Dust may also collect on toys, bottles, pacifiers and other objects which children may put into their mouths.

Lead dust is also increased after older lead painted walls have been disturbed through remodeling or repainting. Home renovations and remodeling contribute to nearly half of the childhood lead poisonings in Missouri.

Soil can also become contaminated with lead due to the breakdown of lead-based paint on buildings and lead paint on playground equipment.

Initially, lead poisoning can be hard to detect — even people who seem healthy can have high blood levels of lead. Signs and symptoms usually don't appear until dangerous amounts have accumulated. Although lead can affect almost every part of your body, it usually targets the oxygen-carrying red blood cells first. In time, it will attack the nervous system.

The signs and symptoms of lead poisoning in children may include:

- **Irritability**
- **Loss of appetite**
- **Weight loss**
- **Sluggishness and fatigue**
- **Abdominal pain**
- **Vomiting**
- **Constipation**
- **Unusual paleness from anemia**
- **Learning difficulties**

Symptoms in adults

Although children are primarily at risk, lead poisoning is also dangerous for adults. Even exposure to amounts of lead too low to cause symptoms in the short term may increase the risk of high blood pressure and mental decline in the future. Symptoms in adults may include:

- **Pain, numbness or tingling of the extremities**
- **Muscular weakness**
- **Headache**
- **Abdominal pain**
- **Memory loss**
- **Mood disorders**
- **Reduced sperm count, abnormal sperm**
- **Miscarriage or premature birth in pregnant women**
- **Fatigue**

Triangle Environmental Science and Engineering Inc. has been providing professional environmental services to central and south central Missouri for over 20 years. We are Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services certified to conduct Professional Lead Based Paint Assessments and would like to help with any environmental evaluation.

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Lead exposure

About 310,000 U.S. children ages 1 to 5 have elevated blood lead levels, which can accumulate over months and years and cause serious health problems.

Effects on children

- Kids absorb up to 70 percent of lead, adults about 20 percent
- Often undetected; no obvious symptoms
- Can lead to learning disabilities, behavioral problems, malformed bones, slow growth
- Very high levels can cause seizures, coma, death

Sources

- Lead-based paint, contaminated dust in homes built before 1978
- Drinking water from lead pipes
- Contaminated food
- Soil (lead does not biodegrade, decay)
- Toys*

What parents can do

- Have child screened if there is concern of lead exposure
- Frequently wash child's hands, toys, pacifiers
- Only use cold tap water for drinking, cooking
- Test paint, dust in home if it was built before 1978

*Old toys with lead paint a known risk, but new toys from China now have come under scrutiny

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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