

Protect your children from the damages caused by lead

By Dan Howard
for TRIB TOTAL MEDIA

As with any environmental issue, you may wonder if lead is really worth all of the hoopla and attention. To give perspective, the CDC estimates that 535,000 US children aged 1-5 years had blood lead levels exceeding their established threshold of BLLs $\geq 5 \mu\text{g/dL}$.

Until 1978, we used lead to improve the performance of our paint, stains and varnishes. Lead was added to paint to speed up drying, increase durability, maintain a fresh appearance, and resist moisture that causes corrosion.

We most commonly hear of lead in paint, but it can be a problem caused by many other sources, some of which will probably surprise you.

Lead is used to keep plastics pliable. Artificial Christmas trees and decorations, particularly those made in China are known sources of lead. The CPSC has recalled many plastic toys, imported jewelry, ceramics, coffee cups and painted wooden toys because they contain lead. The lead dust comes off of the lead contaminated items with normal use and wear.

The sweet taste in some lipsticks is due to lead acetate. Lead acetate also appears as an active ingredient in some hair dyes and some imported mascara.

Western PA and many other areas of the country still have lead pipes used as main municipal water supply pipes and as service lines into homes.

Lead is particularly dangerous to children under the age of 6, fetus's in utero and pregnant women. Lead paints taste sweet and children are more at risk as they chew paint chips, toys and other objects with lead in the paint and plastic. Children also put their hands in their mouths with lead dust from floors and other surfaces on them.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEAD IN CHILDREN (ACCORDING TO THE EPA)

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Behavior and hearing problems
- Lowering of IQ
- Slow physical growth
- Anemia

HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEAD IN ADULTS

- Nervous system effects
- Cardiovascular effects
- Decreased kidney function
- Reproductive problems
- Miscarriage and premature birth in women

KEEPING YOUR HOME LEAD SAFE

- Keep all surfaces well painted. HUD suggests that no more than 1 square inch of peeling paint should be present.
- Promptly repair leaks and other causes of peeling paint.
- Keep the home dust free.
- Wet mop all wood floors that may contain any lead.
- Wet wipe friction areas such as where windows and doors rub.
- Do not use steel wool or friction pads on surfaces that may contain lead.
- Run water through spigots for 30 seconds before using the water for drinking or for food preparation.
- Use only cold water to prepare foods.
- Teach children to wash hands and remove shoes after playing outside.
- Use lead safe procedures for hobbies that use lead such as ceramics, stained glass, and fishing lures.
- Do not use sweepers with beater bars or mops with scrubber strips on finishes that contain lead.
- Do not shake or beat carpets in homes that may contain lead dust.

HIRING HOME IMPROVEMENT CONTRACTORS

On April 22, 2008, the EPA signed a new regulation titled The Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule (RRP). Under the rule, contractors performing renovation, repair and painting projects that disturb lead-based coatings (including lead paint, shellac or varnish) in child-occupied facilities built before 1978 must be certified and must follow specific work practices to prevent lead contamination.

EPA's RRP rule impacts many construction trades, including general contractors, painters, plumbers, carpenters, window installers, wood floor refinishers and electricians. Activities performed by all of these trades can disturb lead-based paint and have the potential to create hazardous lead dust.

The rule establishes minimum training, renovation methods, required educational pamphlets and notifications to occupants for most types of housing.

Under these regulations, all work should be completed with basic containment, personal protection and cleaning methods. The address to search for a certified firm is: http://cfpub.epa.gov/flpp/searchrrp_firm.htm



TESTING FOR LEAD

Physicians can test for lead present in the blood. This is a simple test that should be conducted if there is any possibility that lead exposure could occur or has occurred in the home, school, daycare, playground or any other place a child may spend time.

Surfaces can be tested for lead using 3M Lead-Check Swabs. These EPA approved tests determine if lead is on the tested surface. These are available from 3M directly or other retail outlets. Call 800-949-3552 or go to the website

www.leadcheck.com/contactus to order.

Layers of paint can be tested using EPA approved D-Lead test systems. These tests use a punch tool and allow testing of all of the layers of paint at a location. These can be used for applying the EPA RRP rule. Locate a distributor at www.esca-tech.com or call 414-962-3006.

Dust on floors and other surfaces can be tested by using Ghost Wipes and sending these to approved laboratories for analysis.

WHEN BUYING A HOME USING A FEDERAL LOAN PROGRAM

The HUD/EPA Disclosure Rule establishes a homebuyer's right to conduct a lead hazard evaluation if a homeowner is using federal assistance.

- The homebuyer is granted 10 days to have a lead assessment performed.
- The buyer and seller can agree to change the number of days.
- The buyer can waive that right to a lead assessment by doing so in writing.
- The buyer is responsible for the cost of the assessment and testing.
- If the testing and assessment is positive for lead, the buyer has the right to cancel the transaction.
- The seller is not required to take any action if the assessment is positive for lead.
- If the evaluation reveals intact lead-based

paint hazards, there is no action to be taken.

- The Lead Safe Housing rule requires stabilization of deteriorated paint and passing clearance prior to closing on the property.

What this actually means in practice is that for HUD, FHA and VA loans, if there is more than 1 square inch of peeling paint, the loose and scaling paint needs removed in a lead safe manner according to their rules.

Go to www.EnviroSpect.info/lead for more information about lead and links to important references.

Dan Howard is the owner of EnviroSpect. For environmental consultation call 724 443-6653. For more information visit their website at www.EnviroSpect.info. Email questions to: Dan@EnviroSpectofWesternPA.com. Like us on Facebook or connect @DanHoward251.