

## Child Injury Laws *Blog*

# Lead Paint In Homes & Toys Threatens The Long-Term Health Of Children

Posted by [Jonathan Rosenfeld](#) on January 10, 2011

A child explores the world by touching, tasting, and putting things into its mouth. However, sometimes these objects and materials contain dangerous and unseen contaminants such as lead. [Lead](#) is a naturally occurring, yet very [toxic](#) heavy metal, that can cause dangerous health problems when there is too much of it in our bodies.

For years, lead has been used as a major ingredient in home paint--- and even paint for children's toys as it has many qualities that make paint durable, colorful and inexpensive to manufacture.

In the United States, [lead poisoning](#) is the most common [preventable children's health problem](#). Over 3 million children (ages 6 and under) in the U.S. suffer from lead poisoning. Illinois has the highest rate of child lead poisoning with 5,000 cases in 2008. It is especially dangerous for young children because it can negatively affect mental and physical development. The good news is that lead poisoning is [preventable](#). It just requires parents to take preventative measures to reduce a child's exposure to lead.

Lead poisoning occurs when [lead levels](#) build up in your body over a period of time (months-years). Usually, lead poisoning is not detected until lead levels are dangerously high. Low-level lead exposure (10 micrograms in a deciliter (half-

Jonathan Rosenfeld offers legal services relating to: birth injuries, medical malpractice, day care abuse, foster care abuse, swimming pool injuries, automobile accidents, school bus accidents, dog bites, food poisoning, product liability, amusement park accidents and clergy abuse. For more information please visit Child Injury Laws Blog (<http://www.childinjurylaws.com/>) or call Jonathan directly at (888) 424-5757.

cup) of blood) can cause damage in children. This low-level exposure is enough to affect a child's brain development, which can cause lasting damage. Lead levels of 25 micrograms in a deciliter of blood can cause kidney and nervous system damage.

At very high levels, lead exposure can cause unconsciousness, seizures, and even death. The following complications are associated with lead exposure in children:

- Anemia
- Learning disabilities
- Speech problems
- Brain damage
- Language, speech, and behavior problems
- Decreased muscle/bone growth
- Poor muscle coordination
- Kidney damage
- Nervous system damage

Symptoms of lead poisoning in children are:

- Fatigue/sluggishness
- Irritability
- Weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal pain
- Constipation
- Vomiting
- Anemia/paleness
- Learning problems

Even [newborns](#) can develop lead poisoning if they are exposed to lead in the womb. Symptoms of lead poisoning in newborns includes:

- Slower than usual body growth
- Learning problems

If you think your child may have lead poisoning, you can call the National Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Young children (ages 6 and under) and babies are most at [risk](#) for lead poisoning because they are more likely to ingest lead by chewing on toys and paint chips, eating dirt, and sucking on their fingers which could be covered in lead contaminated dust. Children who live in older homes are more at risk for lead poisoning because of the use of lead-based paint.

Oftentimes, [low-income](#) families are more likely to live in older homes that have not undergone recent renovation, which puts these children at an increased risk for lead poisoning. Therefore, it is important to identify lead hazards in a child's environment and take steps to control and/or remove these hazards.

The [EPA's Lead Renovation, Repair, and Painting Rule](#) requires professionals to follow lead-safe practices for home projects at pre-1978 homes. These projects must be done by certified firms and individuals that are trained to reduce the hazards of lead exposure. These safety practices include posting warning signs, covering air ducts and sealing off the work area, and cleaning dust from the site.

The Rule became effective on April 22, 2010, but the EPA will not actually take [enforcement action](#) for violations of the Rule's firm certification requirement until October 1, 2010 and will not enforce the Rule against individual workers if they have applied to enroll in or have enrolled in a class because concerns were raised about difficulties in obtaining the required firm certification and worker training.

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Main [sources](#) of lead exposure for children in the United States:

- Lead-based paint (especially in older homes – lead paint was not banned until [1978](#))
- Lead contaminated dust (contaminated with soil from outside or lead paint chips)

Other sources include:

- Contaminated soil (can contain lead particles from [gasoline](#) or paint that land on the soil and last for years)
- Contaminated water (usually from old [pipes](#))
- Some [toys](#) (especially if toys are old or from foreign countries)
- Some cosmetics

Lead poisoning is completely [preventable](#) with some [simple](#) practices:

- If you live in an older home, have a professional conduct a lead assessment
- Keep an eye out for peeling paint or paint chips
- Wash your children's hands (after playing outside and before eating) and toys
- Do not let children play on bare soil (choose grass or sandboxes instead)
- Take shoes off when walking inside the house
- Wet mop the floors and windowsills
- If you have old pipes, use only cold water for eating/drinking
- Take precautions when doing home remodeling
- Check recall lists for children's toys

Treatment for lead poisoning depends on the level of lead in your blood. If you have low lead levels, usually all you need to do is avoid lead exposure, which will

reduce your blood lead levels. If you have higher lead levels, you may require chelation therapy (medicine binds to the lead, which is excreted in your urine) or EDTA therapy. If you have very high blood lead levels, even treatment might not be enough to reverse the damage.

The best tool in the fight against child lead poisoning is prevention. Just like baby proofing, it is important to carefully inspect your children's environment and reduce lead hazards. If you have any questions about safe lead removal or want additional information, you can contact HUD (Housing and Urban Development) at 800-RID-LEAD, the National Information Center at 800-LEAD-FYI, or the National Lead Information Center at 800-424-5323.