Parents’ Guide to Preventing Lead Exposure

From Flint to Newark, the topic of lead’s effects on children has been in the news a lot lately. So, what do parents like you need to know about lead and keeping your family safe?

This guide was created to help you understand:
- where lead might be
- how to prevent your family from being exposed to lead
- what to do if you suspect your family has been exposed to lead

Lead Exposure

- Lead can be found in a variety of sources, including old paint, soil, and water.¹
- It is usually in older homes, schools, and businesses, especially in buildings built before 1978 when lead paint was banned.²
- In the case of lead in water, higher levels can result from older plumbing and faucets.

Lead is particularly damaging to pregnant women and young children.³

Pregnant Women

- Lead can lead to miscarriage, premature birth, and low birthweight.

Young Children

- Because of typical early childhood behaviors, such as crawling on the floor, teething, and exploring new environments, children are more likely to ingest lead than adults.
- Lead exposure in children is related to hyperactivity, impulsivity, and attention problems.
- Because lead stays in the blood stream, preventing exposure to lead is key.

For more information visit: www.geears.org

HOW CAN WE PREVENT LEAD EXPOSURE?
The following tips are especially important if you live in a home that was built before 1978 or if you live in a city with a water infrastructure built before 1987.

PREVENTING LEAD EXPOSURE:
- Keep children away from construction sites and avoid them if you are pregnant.
- Clean or remove shoes when entering the home.
- Wash hands, pacifiers, and toys in filtered water.
- Ensure children eat nutritious meals cooked with filtered water.4

PREVENTING LEAD EXPOSURE IN THE HOME:
If you own your home:
- Locate a certified lead inspector if you suspect your home may contain lead-based paint.
- Keep all painted surfaces clean and dust-free with a mop or sponge, warm water, and general all-purpose cleaner. This is especially important if your house was built before 1978.
- Hire EPA-certified contractors to perform any renovations and to remove lead-based paint hazards.

If you are currently a renter:
- Find out if the home you are living in was built before 1978.
- Encourage your property manager or landlord to:
  - Have the property tested for lead, particularly all units with children under the age of 6.
  - Hire an EPA-certified contractor to eliminate any sources of lead-based paint in the home.

PREVENTING LEAD EXPOSURE FROM WATER:
- Use an NSF-certified filter – pitcher-style and faucet-mounted filters should be NSF 53 certified. Not all filters are created equal.
- Remove and replace old faucets, shower heads, etc.
- Flush your water - if your water hasn’t been active for a while (like over a holiday weekend, vacation, or summer break from school), let the water run for 15-30 seconds.5
- Use cold water for cooking – it’s considered safer.
- Drink filtered water on the go.
- Avoid DIY test kits – they can be inaccurate and miss lower lead levels. If you’re concerned that your home’s water has elevated lead levels, contact a certified lead inspector.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO LEAD?
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all children be tested for lead exposure at regular intervals. Georgia Medicaid, PeachCare (CHIP), and private insurers cover lead screenings as part of children’s checkups.6
- If you are worried your child may have been exposed to lead, talk to your pediatrician about a lead screening.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT MY CHILD HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO LEAD?
If your child has a positive lead screening:
- Your pediatrician can provide guidance and refer your child to case management and early intervention services at the Georgia Department of Public Health.
- After consulting your pediatrician, talk to your child’s teacher about the potential effects on your child’s behavior and learning. Ask about services that might benefit your child.