

## **LEAD-BASED PAINT - Are you in danger?**

Many houses and apartments built before 1978 have paint that contain lead (called lead-based paint). Lead from paint, chips, and dust can pose serious health problems if not taken care of properly.

Lead's effect on children, if not detected early, can damage their brain and nervous system, lead to behavioral and learning problems, slow growth, create hearing problems and headaches.

Lead can also be harmful to adults by creating difficulties during pregnancy, reproductive problems for men and women, high blood pressure, digestive problems, nervous disorders, memory and concentration problems, and muscle and joint pain.

Adults and children can get lead in their bodies by breathing the lead in dust created in renovations, putting their hands or other objects covered with lead dust in their mouths, or, in the case of children, eating paint chips or soil that contains lead. Lead is likely to be a hazard in homes built before 1978 where paint (inside or exterior) is not in good condition, i.e., flaking, chipping, peeling, or loose. It may also be a hazard to children on surfaces where they can chew or that get lots of wear and tear such as windows and window sills, door and door frames, stairs, railing and banisters, porches and fences.

**Should you be concerned?** Maybe. It depends on your circumstances. This article is not meant to create another crisis that we must deal with in our daily lives - only to help inform households of the potential danger. You can't tell by looking at paint if it contains lead. If you live in a home built before 1978 and have a child under six years of age, you should check the condition of the paint. Chipping, peeling, flaking or loose paint that can be eaten by the child could be a danger. If you are doing remodeling on a house built before 1978, the dust created by the remodeling could contain lead.

**What can you do if you suspect a hazard?** A simple blood test can detect high levels of lead. Make sure children eat nutritious, low-fat meals high in iron and calcium. Children with good diets absorb less lead. Inspect the condition of paint in the house. Paint that is in good condition is usually not a hazard. Paint can also be tested in a lab or with an x-ray fluorescence machine (over the counter home test kits are not always accurate). If you rent a house built before 1978, notify your landlord of peeling or chipping paint. If you are doing remodeling, learn the proper procedures to remove paint (don't use a scraper, belt sander, propane torch or heat gun). Clean up paint chips immediately and properly dispose of them.

**Where can you turn for help?** The National Lead Information Center has a toll free telephone number (1-800-424-5323) and an Internet address of [www.epa.gov/lead/nlic.htm](http://www.epa.gov/lead/nlic.htm).

For more information about lead-based paint hazard within the City of Bellingham, contact:

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