

# Lead Poisoning

## Lead Poisoning: risk for learning disorders?

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Lead poisoning continues to be a problem, cautions the January 1993 *American Family Physician* (47 ,1:113).

### Life-threatening effects

It can have serious, long-lasting and life-threatening effects on children and adults.

In children, lead poisoning can cause long-term learning disorders and behavior problems. slowed growth, hearing loss, lowered IQ, colic, anemia, kidney damage, brain damage and death. Adults with lead poisoning may suffer from high blood pressure, hearing loss, anemia, shortened life span and brain damage.

### Can cause infertility

Men with lead poisoning may also become infertile.

Children, however, are more at risk than adults. since children tend to put anything (food or otherwise) into their mouths, they have a particularly high risk of absorbing lead in paint by eating or tasting the paint chips.

Lead builds up quickly in children because of their small size Also their incomplete development allows lead to more easily enter the central nervous system where it can be damaging.

### One in 6 children at risk

Lead poisoning is a risk for almost all American children. The Jan. 7, 1993, *Medical Tribune* (34 ,1:25) reports that "in the united states, about one in six children has potentially dangerous levels of lead in the blood."

You can lower your child's risk of lead poisoning by avoiding or reducing exposure to potential sources of lead. Also, have your child's doctor

check at least one a year for lead poisoning.

If your child is at high risk for lead poisoning, you may want to have him checked more often.

### Who is at risk?

High-risk children include those who:

- \* Live in houses build before 1960, or in houses that are run down or are being remodeled.

- \* Have brothers or sisters with lead poisoning.

- \* Live with someone who is exposed to lead on the job.

- \* Live near factories or smelters that release lead into the air

### Symptoms of lead poisoning

Children often do not show definite signs of lead poisoning. Possible symptoms include headache, tiredness, feelings of numbness or tingling, trembling, muscle or joint pain, weight loss, stomach pain and vomiting.

More severe lead poisoning may cause seizures and intense stomach cramps. A child or adult who has been exposed to lead and is suffering from these symptoms should see a doctor immediately.

The best treatment for lead poisoning is a healthy dose of prevention. Try to limit lead exposure as much as possible and have children ages one to six tested for lead poisoning at least once a year.

### How to avoid lead poisoning

Ways you can help avoid lead poisoning from the April 7, 1993, edition of *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* (B 12) include:

- Test the paint in your house and your tap water.

- Lead that is in good condition might be better left alone and covered with a sealant.

- A new coat of paint or wallpaper isn't good enough to cover up the lead on walls -- it can also peel or Chip.

- Wet-mop your floors, windows and doors.

- Make sure your children don't eat lead paint chips or flakes and that they wash their hands often.

- Don't use hot tap water for drinking or cooking -- it tends to leach lead from pipes.

## On-the-job exposure to lead?

Job-related lead exposure can be dangerous for the worker, and it can harm family members when brought home on clothes. Lead exposure can occur in a variety of jobs including:

- Auto Mechanics
- Battery makers
- Bridge repair crews
- Construction workers
- Gas station attendants
- Glass makers
- Plastic makers
- Steel welders, cutters
- Plumbers, pipe fitters
- Lead smelters, refiners
- Rubber product makers
- Lead miners