



Lead in the learning environment

Why it matters — and how to protect children

WHAT IS LEAD

Lead is a toxic metal found in our environment. It's especially harmful to young children — even small amounts can affect brain development, learning, and behavior.

HEALTH RISKS

Lead builds up in bones, muscles, and fat. It can cause:

- Trouble with learning, speech, and behavior
- Lower IQ and delayed development
- Anemia and other blood issues
- In adults: high blood pressure, reproductive issues, kidney damage, and memory problems

WHERE LEAD IS FOUND

- Paint: Often in homes built before 1978. Dust from chipped or peeling paint is a common source of exposure.
- Soil: Near older buildings, highways, or industrial sites.
- Water: From old pipes, faucets, or solder.
- Dust: From contaminated surfaces or worn-down lead paint.
- Products: Items like costume jewelry, imported toys, or older ceramics may contain lead.

WHY IT'S WORSE FOR CHILDREN

Children under 6 are at the greatest risk because:

- They often put hands and toys in their mouths.
- Their bodies absorb more lead than adults.
- Their brains and nervous systems are still developing.

IN PHILADELPHIA SINCE 2007 THERE ARE OVER 1,000 NEW CASES OF HIGH BLOOD LEVELS OF CHILDREN UNDER 6 YEARS OLD YEARLY.

https://www.phila.gov/media/20190319101844/Lead-Surveillance-2017_9.7.2018-final.pdf

2,538 YOUNG CHILDREN IDENTIFIED WITH ELEVATED BLOOD LEAD LEVELS IN ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Between 2015 and 2020, 2,538 children in Allegheny County, PA under the age of 6 had confirmed elevated blood lead levels (EBLLs).

Find your county's blood **lead** level:

<https://www.phaim.health.pa.gov/EDD/>



What You Can Do



SOIL

- Send a soil sample to Penn State for testing: agsci.psu.edu/soil-testing/environmental
- Plant grass or non-edible plants to cover bare soil
- Use entry rugs and wipe shoes before entering
- For gardens, use raised beds with clean soil



PAINT

- Wet mop and dust weekly to reduce lead dust
- Use a microfiber cloth when cleaning
- Hire EPA-certified contractors for renovations in buildings built before 1978
 - → Find a certified firm
- Keep children away from areas with peeling paint



DUST

- Encourage frequent handwashing
- Use a HEPA vacuum to safely clean lead dust



WATER

- Test water for lead for free: pennsylvanialeadtestingprogram.com
- Use NSF-certified filters or pitchers
- Use cold water for cooking and baby formula
- Don't boil water to remove lead—it concentrates it

There is no safe level of lead

Contact us for free support, resources, or questions.