



Central Office: 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT 06109 Phone (860) 721-2822 Fax (860) 721-2823  
Berlin: 240 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT 06037 Phone (860) 828-7017 Fax (860) 828-9248  
Newington: 131 Cedar Street, Newington, CT 06111 Phone (860) 665-8586 Fax (860) 665-8533  
Rocky Hill: 761 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, CT 06067 Phone (860) 258-2770 Fax (860) 258-2767  
[www.ccthd.org](http://www.ccthd.org)

May 6, 2013

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Health District Urges Residents to Take Precautions Regarding Lead Poisoning**

Do you know what is colorless, odorless and tasteless, and can affect both children and adults alike? If you thought of lead, you are correct. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), young children are the most at risk for lead poisoning because of the harmful affects on the developing nerves and brain. In fact, the younger the child, the more damaging exposure can be. For these reasons, the Central Connecticut Health District is urging all residents to take precaution and do their part to prevent lead poisoning in their homes.

Lead is a highly toxic metal that occurs naturally in the Earth's crust. It can be used in paint and gasoline, and can be found in contaminated soil, household dust, toys, drinking water, lead glazed pottery and some metal jewelry. Lead-based paint and lead contaminated dust are the main sources for lead in U.S. children. Lead gets into the bodies of children when lead objects are placed in a child's mouth or by particles of lead dust in the air.

Both adults and children can suffer from lead poisoning. Most adults with lead poisoning are exposed in their work environment or while remodeling their home. Some hobbies, such as making stained glass or refinishing furniture also offer opportunities for lead exposure. Adults with lead poisoning may experience high blood pressure, digestive problems, nerve disorders, memory and concentration problems, muscle and joint pain, cataracts, and fertility problems, especially in men. Women who are pregnant when exposed to lead can pass the lead to their unborn fetus.

Lead poisoning commonly builds up over time through repeated exposure to small amounts of lead. The symptoms of lead poisoning may include: abdominal pain and cramping (usually the first sign of a high, toxic dose of lead poison), aggressive behavior, anemia, constipation, difficulty sleeping, headaches, irritability, loss of previous developmental skills, low appetite and energy and reduced sensations. However, very high levels of lead may cause vomiting, staggering walk, muscle weakness, seizures or coma. Possible complications of lead poisoning include behavior and attention problems, failure at school, hearing problems, kidney damage, reduced IQ and slowed body growth.

Lead-based paints were banned for use in housing in 1978, according to the CDC. All houses built before 1978 are likely to contain some lead-based paint; however, it is the deterioration of the paint that causes a problem, particularly in children. According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health, childhood lead poisoning is the most common pediatric public health problem, yet it is entirely preventable. It is important to determine the construction year of the house or the dwelling where your child may spend a large amount of time. In housing built before 1978, assume that the paint has lead unless tests show otherwise.

To prevent exposure to lead, it is recommended that the following be done:

- Make sure your child does not have access to peeling paint or chewable surfaces painted with lead-based paint.
- Pregnant women and children should not be present in housing built before 1978 that is undergoing renovation.

- Create barriers between living/play areas and lead sources.
- Regularly wash children's hands and toys; discard toys with chipping paint
- Prevent children from playing in bare soil; if possible, provide them with sandboxes.

To determine if a person has lead poisoning, a simple blood test is administered. The CDC recommends that children should be tested at 6 months of age, and once each year thereafter if the risk of exposure is high. Once lead is detected in the body, it is imperative that its source be determined so that exposure can be halted.

The risk of lead poisoning can be reduced by following certain safety practices. In the case of small children, caregivers should wash the child's hands after they play outside, before eating, and before going to bed. Children should not be allowed to play near major roads and bridges. Providing nutritious, low-fat meals that are high in iron and calcium is important, because these minerals help to prevent the absorption of lead.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), contractors have to follow newly developed required guidelines when working with lead. As of April 2010, contractors performing work that disturbs lead-based paint in homes, child care facilities and schools that are built before 1978 must be EPA certified and follow specific work practices to prevent the possibility of lead contamination. When working with homeowners or residents, it is important to discuss the steps you will take to prevent exposure to lead. It is required that contractors set up safe work areas, including the selection of appropriate personal protective equipment, i.e. appropriate clothing and protective eyewear.

Five simple, yet important steps to remember when working lead-safe are: Protect your family and your neighbors; prepare your work area, protect yourself from lead dust, work wet and work clean.

To determine if your home has any lead-contaminated dust, risk assessor or sampling technician may be employed to take samples and submit to a laboratory for analysis. Additional information about lead poisoning is available from the National Institute of Environmental Health Services at [www.niehs.nih.gov](http://www.niehs.nih.gov); the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead), and the Consumer Product Safety Commission at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov). To obtain further information about this or any other public health concerns, contact the Central Connecticut Health District, serving the towns of Berlin, Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield at (860) 721-2822 or by visiting our website at [www.ccthd.org](http://www.ccthd.org).