

Preventing Lead poisoning

Food and good nutrition

Where is lead found?

- Lead is mostly found in old paint (paint chips) from houses built before 1978. Any old home built before 1978 most likely has lead paint.
- In older neighborhoods, very small amounts of lead may also be found in tap water from lead pipes.
- Certain types of plates, cups or bowls can contain lead.
- People working in some professions can bring lead dust into the home. This may include those who work on a gun range, with car batteries or in radiator shops.
- Any home within a mile of a foundry may have elevated levels of lead in the soil.



Why is lead poisoning dangerous?

Lead poisoning can cause sleep, learning and behavior problems in children. High levels of lead can cause serious damage and disability.

What can I do to reduce my child's risk for lead poisoning?

- If you live in a home built before 1978, wet cleaning and dust control will help keep the lead levels down.
- Anyone working in professions with lead exposure should change clothes prior to returning home.
- Prepare food safely.
- Build up your child's resistance to lead poisoning with good nutrition. If your child has an iron or calcium deficiency they can absorb more lead.

Tips for preparing food safely

- If you live in a neighborhood with lead pipes, let tap water run for 2 minutes the first time you run the tap before collecting water to make infant formula or to drink.
- Do not use dishes or pottery from other countries if you think they might contain lead.
- Wash your hands with soap and water if you have touched any dirt before fixing foods. You want to make sure there is no lead dust on your fingers.
- Have your child wash their hands before eating.
- Wash off all bottles, pacifiers or foods that fall on the floor before giving them back to your child.

Why is it important to make good food choices?

The food that your child eats can make a difference in how much lead gets into your child's blood. Choose foods that help protect your child from lead poisoning. Serve as many fresh and frozen foods as you can. Serve foods high in **iron, calcium, and vitamin C.**

Foods high in iron:

- Chicken, turkey, lean beef and pork, liver, tuna fish.

Note: Your body absorbs more iron from meat than from other sources. If you do not eat meat, you may have to increase your intake of these plant-based iron-rich foods:

- Cooked dried beans or peas, baked beans, chili, lima beans, butter beans, black-eyed peas.
- Cereals labeled as “iron-fortified”.
- Baked potato with skin or boiled potatoes.
- Greens and spinach.
- Raisins, sunflower or pumpkin seeds.
- Whole wheat or enriched breads.

**Foods high in calcium:**

- Milk, cheese, yogurt. Skim or low-fat milk products are best.
- Low-fat ice cream, frozen yogurt.
- Greens and kale.

Foods high in vitamin C:

- Oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, strawberries, cantaloupe.
- Tomatoes, bell peppers, greens, kale and broccoli.
- Potatoes and sweet potatoes baked in their skins.
- Juices – orange, grapefruit, and pineapple. Limit juice to 4 ounces per day.

Other recommendations

- Add a food with vitamin C to each meal.
- If your child’s doctor prescribes iron medicine for your child, mix it with a little bit of orange (or other) juice with vitamin C.
- Cook foods in iron pots and pans. This will add a lot of iron to your child’s diet.
- Do not serve hot or iced tea during a meal. Tea keeps the body from taking in iron.
- Serve healthy snacks. Five to six small meals are better than three big meals. A child with an empty stomach will absorb more lead.

What foods should I limit?

1. Food high in **fats** and **oils** make it easier for the body to absorb lead.
2. Limit these foods in your child’s diet:
 - Butter
 - Oil
 - Sausage
 - French fries
 - Lard
 - Bacon
 - Potato Chips
 - Fried foods
3. Removing skins from chicken and fat from meat will help.

ALERT: Call your child’s doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.