



Lead Safe Detroit Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Visit www.detroitmi.gov/LeadSafe for more information or call the Detroit Health Department Lead Prevention and Intervention program at 313-876-0133 for lead safe services.

What is lead?

Lead is a toxic metal that is harmful if breathed in or swallowed, especially in small children. Lead was added to paints used in homes before 1978 and can be found in old painted surfaces and water fixtures, dust and soil. Lead was also previously used to solder water pipes.

How does lead poisoning typically happen in Detroit?

Most lead poisoning in Detroit is related to aging houses with peeling and cracking lead paint. When lead paint in the house cracks or peels, it can create lead dust. Lead poisoning happens when this lead dust is breathed in or swallowed. In addition to inhaling air that may contain lead, young children may also eat paint chips. Children often have contact with lead dust by crawling or putting their hands and toys in their mouths.

Can lead poisoning be caused by home renovations?

Yes, the most common way for lead poisoning to occur is from chipping or sanding paint which causes lead dust in homes built before 1978. Use precaution during construction projects in your home to reduce the likelihood of lead exposure.

Who is at risk for lead poisoning?

Children ages 6 and younger are at the greatest risk because they are still growing and developing. Pregnant women and nursing mothers are also at risk and should avoid exposure to lead to protect their children. Adults can also suffer from lead poisoning, however, there are few long-term effects of lead poisoning in adults.

What are potential health effects from lead?

Lead poisoning often shows no symptoms. Young children (less than 6 years old) and pregnant women are at the highest risk of negative effects of lead poisoning. Increased levels can lead to: decreased learning and memory, impaired speech and hearing function, irritability, tiredness, and stomach pain. Higher levels might lead to vomiting, constipation, headaches, difficulty concentrating, or weight loss. Seek out your doctor if you are concerned for potential lead ingestion.

Should I have my child tested for lead poisoning?

Yes, the Detroit Health Department recommends that all children in Detroit under the age of 6 should be tested for lead. A lead test is the only way to know if your child has lead poisoning. Most children who have lead poisoning do not look or act sick.

Call the toll-free number on the back of your child's health insurance card to make an appointment for a lead test with your pediatrician or other health care provider. You can also make an appointment at Children's Hospital Pediatrics Specialty Clinic by calling 313-832-8290. The Detroit Health Department also provides lead testing at the Samaritan Center (5555 Connor, Detroit, MI 48213). Call 313-410-8142 to make an appointment.

If your child does not have medical coverage, check to see if they are Medicaid eligible by visiting www.mibridges.michigan.gov/access.

Detroit Health Department

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<http://www.detroitmi.gov/health>

Michael E. Duggan, Mayor

**What can I do to keep lead out of the body?**

Eat healthy foods – foods with calcium, iron, and vitamin C can help keep lead out of the body.

- Calcium is in milk, yogurt, cheese, and green leafy vegetables like spinach.
- Iron is in lean red meats, beans, peanut butter, and cereals.
- Vitamin C is in oranges, peppers, and juice.

I have small children in my household. What can I do to prevent them from becoming lead poisoned?

- Contact the Detroit Health Department Lead Prevention and Intervention program at 313-876-0133 to arrange for a lead advocate to visit your home. Our lead advocates can give you specific information on reducing lead exposure, identify potential sources of lead in your home, and refer you and your family to programs that will remove lead from your home.
- Keep your child away from peeling paint or household surfaces that may be painted with lead-based paint.
- Create barriers in your living and play areas to prevent your child from coming into contact with lead sources. This may also include removing your shoes when entering the house to prevent bringing in lead-contaminated soil from outside.
- Regularly wash children's hands and toys.
- Regularly mop floors and wipe windows with soapy water and other wet cleaning agents.
- Prevent children from playing in bare soil that may be contaminated with lead. Plant grass, spread mulch or wood chips, or install a sandbox (cover when not in use).
- Avoid buying household goods, cookware, medicine, cosmetics, candies, and toys that may contain lead.
- Use only cold water from your faucet for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula. Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead due to your household plumbing, not the local water supply.

How is lead poisoning treated?

Treatment for lead poisoning depends on how high the lead level is. At a very high level, an individual should be hospitalized so that the lead can be removed from his or her blood. At lower levels, steps should be taken to stop further lead exposure while the body clears the lead itself. Contact your health care provider immediately for testing and treatment if you think you may have been exposed to lead.

How long does it take for lead to leave the body?

Depending on the level of lead exposure, it may take several weeks, months or years for lead to leave the body after exposure. If you have been exposed to lead, contact your health care provider for a lead test.

Is it safe to wash my hands or bathe with water from my sink or shower?

Yes, it is generally safe to use the water from your faucet for washing your hands and showering regardless of whether your water contains lead. Lead is unlikely to be absorbed through contact with one's skin.

How can I test the water in my household for lead?

Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) and the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) routinely test our water supply in Detroit. The drinking water provided by GLWA and distributed by DWSD meets and exceeds all federal and state Safe Drinking Water Act standards for quality and safety. If you would like to test your home's water for lead, visit <http://www.detroitmi.gov/How-Do-I/Find/Lead-and-Water-Testing> to complete a Lead and Copper Sample Request Form. For any other questions about lead testing in drinking water, please call 313-964-9300.

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