

Lead Poisoning

Lead is a common form of poisoning, especially for children 6 months to 6 years of age. Signs and symptoms are often not recognized for a number of years. Lead poisoning may cause mild behavioral and IQ deficits to permanent brain damage in severe cases. Sources of lead poisoning include: (1) paint dust or chips in houses built prior to 1960, especially around doors and window sills. Be sure to ask about frequently visited homes or day care centers, (2) living near a lead processing smelter, a battery processing plant or related industry, or with an adult worker who brings home lead dust on their clothing; (3) other sources include swallowing lead shot, jewelry, fishing weights, cosmetics, and cooking or drinking from leaded glazed earthenware; (4) lead lined cisterns or pipes are also a source.

When in doubt, have paint, water or earthenware tested. Children at risk should have lead testing prior to 1 year of age or as soon as possible after risk has been identified. When remodeling a house with lead paint, a professional experienced in strict lead exposure guidelines should be used.