



Home Advisory: Talking Points for Head Start Staff

When you are preparing for a home visit, read this lead poisoning fact sheet so you can help educate parents about lead poisoning and how to prevent it. To complement these talking points, we've developed a checklist that you can walk parents through or leave behind after your visit.

The following questions and answers provide you with information you need about lead. Don't forget to refer parents to the "*Chance of a Lifetime*" brochure for more information on lead.

Why should you be worried about lead?

Lead in the body can cause learning or behavior problems, brain, liver, and kidney damage, or hearing loss. Extreme cases of lead poisoning may even cause seizures, coma, or death!

Could lead be found in and around my home?

Lead is a harmful metal typically found in homes built before 1978, and is located in several household products and materials, including:

- ▶ Chipping and peeling old paint;
- ▶ Lead dust created when windows or doors with lead-paint surfaces are frequently opened and closed;
- ▶ Contaminated soil and food;
- ▶ Water contaminated by plumbing made with lead; and
- ▶ Clothing and shoes of people who work in lead-related industries like painters, automobile repairers, battery makers, stained glass hobbyists, and construction workers.

Are my children at risk for being lead poisoned?

Children under the age of six who live in housing built before 1978 are at a high risk for being poisoned by lead.

How can you tell if your child is lead poisoned?

Children poisoned by lead often do not look sick. The *only* sure way to know if someone has too much lead in his or her body is by taking a simple blood test. Upon entering the Head Start Program, children are required to have their blood tested. If you're not sure if this procedure has been performed, ask your child's doctor for a test, or ask about the results of earlier blood tests. Children with lead poisoning may also complain of headaches or stomachaches, or become irritable.

How can you prevent lead poisoning?

- ▶ Test all of your children (under the age of six) for lead poisoning.
- ▶ Talk with your landlord about fixing peeling or chipping paint in your home.
- ▶ Keep children away from soil that may have lead in it.
- ▶ Clean your floors, window sills, and other surfaces regularly.
- ▶ Feed your children four to six small healthy meals a day.
- ▶ Wash children's hands, toys, bottles, and pacifiers often.
- ▶ Use a doormat to wipe soil off your shoes before entering the home.
- ▶ Run your sink faucet with cold water for 15 to 30 seconds or until cold (use a filter certified to remove lead) before drinking or using for cooking.
- ▶ Cook and store food and drinks in containers *other* than imported pottery, dishware, crystal, or china.

Who should you contact if you believe your family has a lead problem?

To speak with someone about protecting your family from lead poisoning, contact your local health department or the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-LEAD (5323) (for added convenience, bilingual specialists also are available to assist you). To learn more about lead or to obtain copies of public documents related to lead topics, visit EPA's Web site at www.epa.gov/lead.



Thank you for taking the time to talk to parents and children about the importance of lead poisoning prevention.

