

Reducing Your Exposure to Lead in Soil



There is no safe level of lead in the body. Children come into contact with lead when playing outdoors in yards and gardens that have contaminated soil. Exposure to contaminated soil is more dangerous for young children because of their frequent hand-to-mouth activity and their increased susceptibility to lead. Other sources of lead exposure include ingestion of lead-based paint chips and dust, inhalation of lead dust in the air, and ingestion of lead in drinking water. Imported candies, cosmetics, toys, and other products may also contain lead.

Health Effects of Lead

Even low levels of lead in blood may affect a child's ability to pay attention, academic achievement, behavior, and development. Children younger than 6 years are at greatest risk from exposures to lead. Most children with elevated blood lead levels do not exhibit any symptoms, however effects may appear later in age. Other health effects may include kidney damage, anemia, and reductions in birth weight. Symptoms of severely elevated blood lead levels (lead poisoning) may include stomach aches, vomiting, poor appetite, or nausea.

How to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Your Home

- Limit the amount of soil you bring into your home by taking off coats, outerwear, and shoes

when entering your home. Place washable rugs at all entries to your home.

- Clean your home weekly to keep it dust free as possible. Clean floors, window sills, doorframes, and baseboards with soap and water. Use a wet mop on hard floors, and clean window sills with wet rags.
- Vacuum carpets and rugs before mopping non-carpeted areas. If possible, use a vacuum with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.
- Wash children's hands frequently, and especially after playing outside, before they eat, and before bedtime. Adults should also wash hands frequently.
- Wash your hands after gardening and before eating or drinking.
- Bathe your pets frequently.

How to Reduce Exposure to Lead When Outdoors

- Avoid eating or drinking while working in the yard or in the garden.
- Dampen soils with water before you garden to limit the amount of dust you inhale.
- Avoid working or playing in the yard on windy days, when dust can be stirred up.
- Keep children and pets away from bare soil areas.
- Have children play in grassy areas or a sandbox that can be covered.

