

Check Your House for Lead

The cause of more than 90% of all childhood lead poisoning cases in Kent County are caused by deteriorating lead-based paint in older housing. Checking to make sure your house is lead-safe is the FIRST thing a parent should do to protect their child from lead poisoning.

- **Check the exterior** of the home for peeling paint. Pay special attention to windows, doors and porches— areas that are particularly known for having lead based paint.
- **Check your windows** inside and out for peeling paint AND paint dust. Windows are “friction surfaces” and can generate a lot of invisible lead dust. Look in the window trough for residue and chips. Clean out the window using soapy water and disposable rags or paper towels. Consider repairing the windows to stabilize the paint and reduce friction, or consider replacement.
- **Exterior Soil.** The dirt around the outside of older houses can have high levels of lead from years of peeling paint and other pollutants. Make sure your child does not play in the bare soil surrounding the house. Plant grass, mulch, or plant bushes to keep children from playing in the dirt. Provide alternative play spaces that are more attractive, like a sandbox.
- **Shoes off!** Make sure dirt does not get tracked into the home. Institute a “shoes off at the door” policy. Plant grass and/or pave walkways.
- **Play Safe.** Watch where your child plays. Is the paint near where they play in good repair? Does soil get tracked in from the outside into their play area?
- **Think “LEAD SMART” twice a month.** Go through the house and look for possible sources of paint chips, dust and soil. Clean high-risk areas like windowsills, entryways, and play areas. Use soapy water in a spray bottle for cleaning solution and ALWAYS use disposable rags. Some areas, like entryways, may require more frequent cleaning.
- **THINK “LEAD SMART” when making repairs.** As you fix your home, think “Lead Smart” and make it easy to clean. Hard, easily cleanable surfaces reduce lead risks. Carpeting, porous flooring and bare wood can hold onto high levels of lead dust.
- **Remodeling can make it worse!** ALWAYS use “Lead Safe Work Practices” when you work. Home Repair Services offers training every month (Call 616-241-2601 x236). Consider hiring a trained and state certified lead contractor when working on high-risk areas. In older housing, always assume paint that has not been tested contains lead and work lead-safe.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Michigan Department of Community Health advise that children living in pre-1978 housing have a blood lead test at their one and two-year well child visits. Your pediatrician should test your child for lead, or you can contact the Kent County Health Department at (616) 632-7063.

Childhood lead poisoning causes permanent brain damage and other long-lasting health problems. Young children living in older housing are at high risk because they crawl, play on the floor, and put their hands, toys, and other items into their mouths. Help your child grow up healthy and smart-check your home for lead hazards!