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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
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WWW.ERIE.GOV/HEALTH



# Lead In Paint & Dust

## LEAD FACTS



### Did you know...

The older the home, the more likely it contains lead-based paint

93% of houses in Erie County were built before 1978

85% of houses in Buffalo were built before 1960



Sources: New York State Dept. of Health, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Center for Disease Control (CDC)

## Lead in paint

Lead was used as an additive to paint to make it more durable, and to protect wood used in housing construction. Lead-based paint was used in more than 38 million homes until it was banned for residential use by the US government in 1978. If your home was built before 1978, you should assume that lead paint is present and take precautions.

Lead-based paint is usually not a hazard if it is in good condition. As lead paint ages, it can chip, peel or crumble into dust. When lead paint deteriorates (peeling, chipping, chalking, cracking or otherwise damaged) it is a hazard and needs immediate maintenance.

Even a tiny paint chip can contain enough lead to poison a child.

## Lead in dust

The most common way lead gets into the body is from dust in older homes. Normal hand to mouth activities in young children (like eating and playing) move dust from surfaces like floors and window sills into the child's body.

Lead dust is particularly dangerous because it is invisible. Common renovation activities like sanding, cutting and demolition can also create hazardous lead dust and paint chips.

According to the EPA, the amount of lead dust equal to the size of a sweetener packet (one gram) is enough to contaminate an entire room to hazardous levels.

Lead dust can form when lead-based paint is scraped, sanded, or heated.

## FRICITION & IMPACT SURFACES

Lead-based paint may be a hazard when found on surfaces that children chew or that get a lot of wear and tear, such as

- Windows and window sills
- Doors and door frames
- Stairs, railings, banisters, and porches



Lead dust can form when painted surfaces rub together such as windows and window frames. These friction surfaces are known to be a primary source for lead poisoning.



## Why lead is a health concern

Lead is toxic - especially to young children under the age of six. Even very small amounts can be harmful. Lead affects the body in many ways and can cause brain damage, learning disabilities, developmental delays, hearing loss, behavioral problems, and loss of IQ points. Adults can experience loss of motor control, high blood pressure, headaches, and fertility problems.

People can absorb lead into their bodies by breathing it in or swallowing it. The most common exposure pathway is through lead contaminated house dust from deteriorated paint.

Once absorbed, lead is extremely difficult to remove and can remain in the body for years. Preventing exposure is the best way to avoid lasting harm.

The signs of lead poisoning are not always obvious. A simple blood test can be done to detect lead. New York State Department of Health requires that all children be tested for lead at the age of 1 and 2 and, if determined to be high risk for exposure, tested annually through the age of 5 years old.

# What you can do

The simplest thing anyone can do to reduce lead poisoning hazards is to keep your home clean and to maintain all painted surfaces.

## CLEANING

- Damp dusting and damp mopping weekly.
- Use the “wet, wipe and toss” method to clean. Pay special attention to friction surfaces and areas where children often play.
- Clean up any paint chips immediately.



## MAINTENANCE

Temporary solutions to reduce lead hazards include:

- Interim controls - paint stabilization (repainting), installing window well & track liners.
- Enclosure - installing vinyl or aluminum siding over painted surfaces.

Permanent solutions to eliminate lead hazards include:

- Replacement - installing new window and doors.
- Removal - wet hand-scraping, wire brushing, wet hand sanding or power sanding with HEPA filters.

Methods that generate large amounts of lead contaminated dust are prohibited in Erie County per the Erie County Sanitary Code.

## RENOVATE RIGHT!

If you are performing any renovations or repairs on your pre 1978 house, then you need to work lead safe!

Doing the work yourself? Get trained. Learn how to use Lead Safe Work Practices when remodeling, repairing or painting your home. Every year children are diagnosed with lead poisoning due to exposure during home repairs and renovations.

The Erie County Dept. of Health offers FREE classes on how to protect yourself and your family from being exposed to lead hazards while doing renovations. Classes are open to the public and are offered monthly. Registration is required. For more information on classes call 961-6800 or visit [www.erie.gov/health/lead](http://www.erie.gov/health/lead).

## Hiring a Contractor?

Make sure they are properly certified!

Be sure to ask your contractor about their “RRP” certification(s). Certification is required for all home improvement activity in housing built before 1978 and in ANY child occupied facility. This rule, "Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP)" is intended to ensure that any activity that disturbs paint in older housing is performed using lead-safe work practices.

For more information and a list of certified contractors visit the EPA web site at [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead) or call 1-800-424-LEAD (5323).

# Proper clean up during renovations

Doing renovations and lead removal in older homes will generate a lot of lead dust and debris. Proper cleaning during and after the work is completed is essential to avoid lead poisoning.

## DAILY CLEAN-UP

- Debris should be misted with water, swept up and placed in heavy weight plastic bags.
- Then all surfaces should be wet-dusted and wet-mopped.

## FINAL CLEAN-UP

- HEPA-equipped vacuum should be used on all surfaces. DO NOT use standard household vacuum or shop vacuum, which are not designed or equipped to trap lead dust particles.
- Then wet-mop surfaces using the two bucket method for washing and rinsing.
- Follow up wet-mopping with a second HEPA vacuuming.

## DISPOSAL

- Debris from lead-based paint removal or renovation may be bagged in heavy duty bags, sealed tightly and disposed of in household trash.
- Never burn lead debris; liquid wastes including wash water should be dumped into sanitary sewer or toilet.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Erie County Dept. of Health  
(716) 961-6800  
[www.erie.gov/health/lead](http://www.erie.gov/health/lead)

NYS Department of Health  
1-800-458-1158  
[www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead](http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead)

Environmental Protection Agency  
1-800-424-LEAD  
[www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead)