

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY FROM LEAD IN YOUR HOME

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Lead-Based Paint should be a concern for all people living and working in buildings which were constructed before 1978. There is a possibility the building contains lead of some sort, be it in the paint, solder or tile glazing. Not identifying lead in your home may place your young children or visiting grandchildren in harms way and you may unknowingly be placing their health at risk.

Lead poisoning affects everyone no matter what their status in life is. When lead-based paint or varnish is used in the home, occupants of the home may suffer and pay a high price. That price may include brain and nervous disorders, bone and teeth disorders, kidney, liver and digestive problems, elevated blood lead levels in children, alteration of the way the blood-forming cells in the body work, alteration of the way the nerve cells signal each other in the body and disruption of the way the brain makes the connections for thinking.

It has been reported by the Lead Elimination Action Drive (LEAD), a National Non-Profit Lead Awareness Group, and the National Institute of Environmental Health that approximately 17% of the children in the United States are at risk for lead poisoning. It has been further reported that lead poisoning can be a factor in renal disease, cardiovascular affects, reproductive toxicity and may cause irreversible neurological damage.

The problem with lead is that it is common because it has been a useful metal in many ways -- easy to work with, simple tools, handy and cheap to buy. However, the cost is actually great when a child is discovered to have lead poisoning. Why is lead dangerous to the human body? It has been reported that lead interferes with normal body functions. It has further been reported that lead can change the way the blood-forming cells work, alter the way the nerve cells signal each other, and can disturb and destroy the way the brain makes connections for thinking. With lead-exposed children, they may not be as quick at their studies or as good at hitting a baseball or dribbling a basketball as children without lead exposure.

What can you do to protect your family from lead exposure? First, know what and where the lead is in your environment. If you suspect that your water contains lead, have your water tested or, as a minimum precaution, flush the water lines by opening the spigot for a minute or two before drawing water for morning coffee or cooking and drinking. If your house is more than 15 years old, it may once have had lead-based paint on it. If you suspect lead-based paint was used, test the surfaces a child can reach to see if there's lead in the paint. A simple lead swab test is available on the market and is very accurate. If you desire a more in-depth test, you may want to consider hiring a professional Lead Inspector who would use an X-Ray Fluorescent (XRF) Analyzer which uses a radioactive source to "fluoresce" atoms, which in turn, emits x-rays, which are filtered, analyzed and counted to determine lead content. If you have peeling, flaking or damaged painted surfaces, repair or cover them before they become a problem. If you need to repair or remove lead-based painted surfaces, get a professional's opinion on how to do the work safely. Keep children away from any areas that are known to have lead and if you are pregnant, stay away, too. Lastly, if you suspect lead-based paint, routinely wet mop the areas clean. Do not vacuum -- Dust will be created. If you have any doubts about your or your child's possible

exposure to lead, see a doctor and ask whether you or your child should be tested. Your doctor knows how to get the test done and your doctor can tell you what you need to do, if anything, when the tests come back. For more information on lead, contact the City of Escanaba Building Inspection Department (906-786-9402), the National Lead Information Center (800-532-3394), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (414-488-7330), the Alliance to End Lead Poisoning (202-462-6272) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (202-219-8151).

Lead poisoning is a totally preventable disease and the elimination process begins with you.