



*Eliminating
Childhood
Lead Poisoning*



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CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING IN CHICAGO

Chicago leads the nation in the number of children identified as lead poisoned. In 2002, more than 12,000 of Chicago's children were identified as lead poisoned. The number likely is much higher since less than 40% of Chicago children who should be tested for lead poisoning are tested.

Most children are lead poisoned in their homes, and deteriorating lead paint on windows, doors, and porches in homes built before 1978 is the main cause. Children in pre-1978 homes being renovated and remodeled also are at serious risk.

Although lead can harm all children six years and younger, children under age three years are at greatest risk for lead poisoning because of the high levels of lead they retain; the extent to which they crawl and put their hands in their mouths, picking up lead dust that has settled in window sills, toys, or on the floor; and the sensitivity of their nervous system.

Lead poisoning in children can cause irreversible brain damage, and even at very low levels can lead to:

- Learning disabilities, such as speech and language disorders.
- Behavioral problems, such as aggression and hyperactivity.



WHO WE ARE

Lead Safe Chicago is working to eliminate childhood lead poisoning in Chicago and to increase the number of affordable, lead safe housing units.

We are a coalition of community, housing and children's health advocates; legal service providers; city, county, state, and federal government officials; realtors and property owners; parents of lead poisoned children; and representatives of the insurance and financial industries.



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www.leadSAFEillinois.org

25 East Pearson Street, Suite 1107
Chicago, Illinois 60611
Tel 312.915.6481 Fax 312.915.6485

Research suggests a link between lead exposure and delinquency and criminal behavior.

While lead poisoning is potentially devastating, it is also entirely preventable.

PREVENTING EXPOSURE IS THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT LEAD POISONING

Reduce lead hazards in your home

Clean floors, baseboards, window frames/sills, and other surfaces with warm water and any all-purpose, non-abrasive cleaner. Vacuum carpeting, rugs, and upholstery frequently. Use a wet mop or damp dust cloth when cleaning; otherwise you will just spread the dust into the air and it will resettle. Completely rinse sponges and mop heads after cleaning dirty or dusty areas to avoid spreading lead dust.

Keep your child safe from lead hazards

Cover chipping and peeling paint with duct tape or contact paper. Move beds, cribs, and playpens away from peeling paint. Do not let children play near painted surfaces that often rub together or get bumped, such as doors and windows. Wash often children's toys, bottles, pacifiers, and stuffed animals that may have had lead dust settle on them. Wash children's hands and faces often, especially before eating and sleeping.

Eat healthy

Children with lead in their blood, also known as an Elevated Blood Lead Level (EBLL), may not be getting enough iron, calcium, or vitamin C in their diets. A healthy diet may help to slow the absorption of lead into the body.

Have your child screened for lead

Your child may not appear sick. Beginning at age six months until age seven your child should be assessed to determine risk of lead exposure or be given a blood test.

WHAT WE DO

Lead Safe Chicago is working to:

- Maximize the number of affordable, lead safe housing units.
- Increase the identification of properties with lead paint.
- Motivate property owners to take the initiative in making their properties lead safe.
- Increase identification of young children who are at risk for lead poisoning.
- Promote lead safe work practices when remodeling or renovating homes with lead paint.
- Raise awareness among legislators, decision makers, and media about lead poisoning and how to prevent it.
- Generate revenue to provide loans and grants to assist property owners in making homes lead safe.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Parents: Beginning at age six months until age seven have your child tested for lead poisoning and take measures to make your home lead safe.

Landlords: Replace pre-1978 windows in a lead safe manner and maintain lead safe buildings.

Hardware stores: Educate customers about lead safe work practices.

Carpenters, contractors, window installers: Use lead safe work practices.

Realtors Promote the importance of lead safe housing to buyers and sellers.

Healthcare providers: Test all children under the age of seven for lead and educate parents about lead poisoning.

Legislators: Support legislation that promotes a lead safe Illinois.

Trade associations: Educate your constituencies about the importance of lead safe work practices and support legislation that promotes a lead safe Illinois.

Community-based organizations: Create programs to help prevent lead poisoning and assist families of lead poisoned children.



Visit www.lead-safe-illinois.org for information and resources you can use to help create a lead safe Chicago for our children.

Lead Safe Chicago is convened by Loyola University Chicago ChildLaw Center and the Chicago Department of Public Health.

The Illinois Lead Safe Housing Task Force monitors implementation of Lead Safe Chicago's lead poisoning prevention efforts. The Task Force, chaired and staffed by Loyola University Chicago's ChildLaw Center, advocates for policy reform, promotes public awareness, and fosters collaborations to achieve its mission.