

## Lead-Safe Child Care

Please be advised that programs for preschool-aged children need to be inspected for potential lead paint hazards and found to be in compliance with the Lead Poisoning Control Act. To implement this policy, Child Care Licensing staff will be evaluating potential lead hazards as part of their ongoing inspection visits. **Facilities built after 1978** are exempt from any lead safety inspection. Programs serving only children aged six (6) or older are also exempt.

### **Why is lead exposure a problem for child care providers?**

Small amounts of lead may be harmful to the developing brain and nervous system of young children, infants, and fetuses. Children under the age of 6 are the most vulnerable. Lead poisoning can cause developmental delays, behavior problems, and learning disabilities. These effects can be permanent and irreversible.

### **How do children become lead-poisoned?**

Children typically get lead poisoning at home or in a child care facility by ingesting (eating) dust from lead paint. Lead may be found in paint, dust, soil, and water.

### **If my building has lead-based paint, do I have to remove it all to be lead safe?**

Lead-based paint is a hazard only if it is peeling, chipping, cracking, or on a friction surface that creates lead dust. You do not need to remove all the lead-based paint to be lead safe, but you do need to make sure painted surfaces are kept in good repair, and that dust around doors and windows is removed frequently. Beginning in 1978, lead was no longer added to paint manufactured for use in the home. If your child care site was constructed in 1978 or later, it is unlikely that your building has lead-based paint.

### **How can I make my child care facility lead-safe?**

There are some basic cleaning and maintenance steps that you can take to create a lead safe environment in your child care program. By taking these steps you will minimize the amount of lead paint dust and lead paint chips that children may be exposed to inside and outside your child care program.

- **Make sure all painted surfaces are in good condition.** This means that paint (including the paint on the exterior of the building) should not be peeling, flaking, cracking. By federal law, any work done which disturbs lead paint in a child care facility must be done by a renovation, repair, and painting (RRP) certified renovator. You can find RRP certified contractors at [www.epa.gov/lead/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/lead/index.html). When hiring a contractor, ask to see their RRP certificate.
- **Any loose paint and dust should be swept up or vacuumed with a HEPA-filter vacuum only.** *Do not use a normal household vacuum or shop vac - these will spread the lead contamination!* Double-bag any sweepings or vacuum filters to prevent the dust from spilling out of the trash.
- **Thoroughly clean all surfaces, window areas, and floors.** Keeping lead dust levels low prevents children from getting lead dust on their hands and then in their mouths. Thoroughly wash all surfaces weekly. You need to use an all-purpose detergent, and change the water frequently. Follow this cleaning by wet wiping all surfaces with clean water. Lead was added to paint to make it stick, and this double washing is needed to remove the lead dust from these surfaces.
- **Finally, cover bare soil with gravel, mulch, or sod.** Plant grass or bushes so children cannot play in dirt that may have lead in it. This is especially important along the edge of the house where lead paint from the siding has contaminated the soil.

## How do I stay lead-safe?

There are three methods to stay lead-safe. You can maintain a property so lead hazards are not produced (sometimes called “Essential Maintenance”), you can make certain repairs yourself to prevent access or exposure to lead, or you can hire someone to remove leaded components.

Essential Maintenance: Routine cleaning and spot-repairing damaged or chipping painted surfaces prevent the build-up of dangerous levels of lead dust and paint chips. Maintaining a property to keep it lead safe is by far the most cost effective method.

Repairs You Can Do: There are actions you can take to reduce or minimize the potential for children to become lead poisoned. Examples include fencing off soil that may contain a high lead level, landscaping so soil around the house is not accessible, or providing bottled water for drinking and cooking if there is lead in the water.

Hiring a professional: You can hire an RRP Certified Renovator to paint, remove windows, or otherwise stabilize or address lead painted surfaces. By federal law you may not do this work yourself, as doing it incorrectly can easily lead poison a child. Alternatively you can hire an “Abatement Contractor” to permanently remove all lead paint hazards in the building. This is the most expensive option, and is required if a full lead inspection finds lead hazards (elevated dust levels or chipping and peeling paint).

## Where does lead in drinking water come from?

Lead found in drinking water usually originates from internal plumbing. Homes and other buildings built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures, and solder. Regardless of when your home or building was built or your source of drinking water, you should always use the cold water tap when drawing water for cooking or drinking. Hot water can dissolve metal from pipes (such as lead) more effectively than cold water.

## How can I reduce my exposure to lead in drinking water?

Use cold water for drinking or cooking. Never cook or mix infant formula using hot water from the tap. Do not consume water that has sat in your plumbing for more than six hours. Make it a practice to run the water at each tap before use. Run the water until you feel the temperature change before cooking, drinking, or brushing your teeth.

## Where can I get more information?

Call the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Unit at 287-4311 or 866-292-3474 (toll-free in Maine) for more information on how to maintain your property to ensure children do not get poisoned. You can find tips at [www.maine.gov/healthyhomes](http://www.maine.gov/healthyhomes). Choose “Lead Poisoning” and then “Property Owners”.

Licensed lead inspectors offer lead inspection services that identify where lead-based paint and lead hazards are in your building. There will be **no cost to providers** if a full lead inspection is deemed necessary by your licensing worker. If lead paint hazards are found, however, any abatement costs will be the provider's responsibility. Risk assessors can also perform lead inspections, and can provide you with options for addressing any lead hazards that are identified. Lead inspectors and risk assessors are the only professionals who can issue lead-safe certificates. Lead abatement contractors are contractors who are specially trained to eliminate lead hazards without creating an unsafe environment while they do their work.

To get a list of licensed lead inspectors, risk assessors and lead abatement contractors, or for more information on lead-safe certificates and essential maintenance practices, please contact the Department of Environmental Protection Lead Licensing and Enforcement Program at 287-2651.