

Lead in soil

How to keep your family safe



What is lead?

Lead is a metal that can cause serious health problems. Even small amounts of lead can be harmful, especially for children and pregnant women.

How does lead get into the soil?

Before people were aware of lead's harmful effects, many products contained lead. Lead may be in your soil because of past uses, such as lead in gasoline or house paint before 1978. Soil can contain higher amounts of lead near certain industrial plants and hazardous waste sites. These plants include smelters and battery recycling facilities. Lead attaches itself to soil and can travel through the air as dust.

How does lead get into my body?

Lead enters the body when swallowed or inhaled. Common ways lead from soil enters your body:

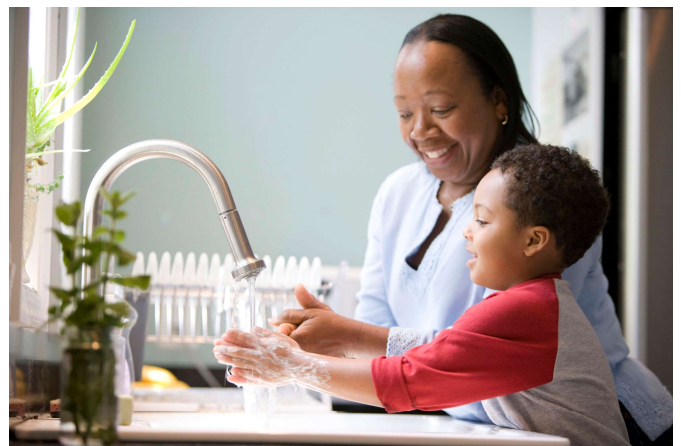
- Putting your hands in your mouth after touching soil containing lead.
- Eating food grown in soil containing lead.
- Breathing in dust from digging or playing in soil containing lead.

Who can I contact for more information?

Call your doctor

Texas DSHS Blood Lead Surveillance Branch: call 800-588-1248 for assistance with lead poisoning prevention steps and questions about blood lead testing

Texas DSHS Health Assessment and Toxicology Program: call 888-681-0927 or email epitox@dshs.texas.gov for assistance with other health-related issues from an industrial site



There are actions you can take to protect your family from lead.

Lead in Soil

Can my soil be harmful to my health?

Lead can cause serious harm to your body even if you don't feel sick. Lead is especially dangerous for children. Young children are more likely to eat dirt or dust, or to put their hands in their mouths. Children's growing bodies are more vulnerable to lead's harmful effects. Lead poisoning can result in learning and behavioral disorders.

A pregnant mother can pass lead to her baby, putting both at risk for harmful effects.

If you think you came into contact with lead, it is important to talk to your doctor and get a blood test. Only a blood test can confirm lead exposure.

What can I do?

There are many things you can do to protect your family from lead poisoning.

Reduce lead contaminated dirt and dust in your home.

- Don't wear shoes inside to prevent tracking soil inside.
- Clean areas where children play using wet (not dry) mop and wiping methods.
- Use a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter, or vacuum when children are not around.
- Clean pets' feet and fur before they come inside.
- Wash hands frequently, especially before eating and at bedtime.
- Wash children's toys often.

Protect yourself when gardening or playing outside.

- Cover bare patches of soil with mulch, grass, or other ground cover.
- Always wash hands after handling soil or playing outside.
- Change out of dirt covered clothes and wash separately.
- Use a raised bed or containers with non-contaminated soil for gardening if your lead soil levels are high.
- Wash foods grown in your garden before eating.

Avoid lead exposure from other sources.

- Follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidance to prevent exposure to lead paint if your house was built before 1978.
- Banned for many items, lead is still used in some products such as bullets and fishing weights. Lead is also found in some toys and costume jewelry.
- Finding lead in certain folk remedies, amulets, is not uncommon. Lead may be in imported ceramics, candies, and spices.

Eat a healthy diet.

Talk to your pediatrician to make sure your child is getting enough iron, vitamin C, and calcium in their diet. These nutrients help protect your body from the harmful effects of lead.

Resources

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention from the Centers for Disease Control: cdc.gov/nceh/lead/

Texas Department of State Health Services Blood Lead Educational Materials:

dshs.texas.gov/lead/parents.shtm

Environmental Protection Agency National Lead Information Center:

epa.gov/lead/forms/lead-hotline-national-lead-information-center



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