

Lead Paint Testing

Guidelines

Worried about lead in your home? If you are living in an older structure you should be informed. Lead can be a serious danger. Through this fact sheet, developed for property owners, renters, and contractors, learn how to test your home for lead.

The Dangers of Lead

Lead poisoning is a concern for both children and adults. It can cause:

- Permanent problems with health, learning, and behavior in young children
- High blood pressure, kidney damage, and fertility problems in adults

You can be exposed to lead any time you breathe lead dust, fumes, or swallow anything that contains lead.

About 75% of homes built before 1978 contain some lead-based paint. The older the home the more likely it is to contain lead-based paint. You should assume that any home built before 1978 contains some lead. To be sure make sure to test your home.

You can protect yourself from lead by following the appropriate remodeling safety procedures.

High Risk Areas

Where should you test for lead in your home?

- Areas with chipped and peeling paint (ex. window wells, sills, on radiators, walls, doors, etc.)
- Soil (ex. around the outside of your house, garage, fence, homes near busy roadways, etc.)
- Water (ex. plumbing with lead or copper pipes, lead solder, brass faucets etc.)

Why should you target these areas?

- Old and deteriorating paint creates loose paint chips and lead dust. Swallowing these can cause lead poisoning. Further, lead dust can easily get

on children's hands or toys increasing their chances of lead poisoning.

- Soil containing lead paint chips or dust is a risk area. Once lead is in the soil it doesn't wash away. Playing in these areas will increase a child's risk of lead poisoning.
- If your plumbing has lead pipes or solder or your faucets are made of brass, then your household water's chances of containing lead is increased. Lead can leach out of the plumbing and into your water, increasing the chances of lead poisoning.

People at Risk

Who can get lead poisoning?

- Property owners who are remodeling pre-1978 homes
- Their families
- Hired workers

Older homes may have many layers of paint. The older of these are very likely to contain lead. If these are disturbed during remodeling these older layers can become high-risk areas. Lead dust is easy to pick up on your hair, skin, or clothing. This dust can then be passed to other family members or those working on the project with you. Therefore, it is important to test for lead before beginning to remodel.

Testing for Lead

There are three methods you can use to test your home for lead.

Home Test Kits

Home test kits are low cost, easy to use, and produce quick results. You can purchase them in paint stores, hardware stores or building supply stores. However, they don't tell you how much lead is present. Some home test kits will also work on ceramics, drinking water, dust, and soil. Make sure to use the correct kit for the type of sample you are testing.



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Environmental Laboratories

If you'd rather not use a kit you can have paint, dust, soil, or drinking water samples tested by a certified laboratory. Call the laboratory and ask for directions on the way to collect your sample, how much material to collect, and how to store it before bringing it to the lab. The sample must be taken correctly or the results will not be accurate.

If you use a certified laboratory it will be able to tell you how much lead is present in whichever high-risk area you are testing. In some cases the lab will also explain the results to you. However, certified labs are more expensive than home test kits and take longer for results. Lab results are usually received in five to ten business days.

Licensed Lead Risk Assessors

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) operates a licensing program for lead risk assessors. Lead risk assessors must successfully complete an approved initial training course and an annual

refresher course. You can hire a consulting firm that employs licensed lead risk assessors to evaluate a home for sources of lead before and after remodeling. The post remodeling tests make sure all the harmful lead dust has been removed. Contact MDH for a list of consulting firms or go to www.health.state.mn.us/lead and click on the "Find a Contractor or Consultant" link on the left side of the page to find a consulting firm in your area.

How do I get more information?

For more information about lead please contact the Lead Program at the Minnesota Department of Health. You can call us at 651-201-4620, visit our Web site at www.health.state.mn.us/lead, or write us at the address listed on the front of this fact sheet.

Lead is a risk for both you and your family. Be informed. Be safe.

This handout was developed as a summary of the MDH lead regulations. It does not cover all situations or conditions and is not to be used as a substitute for the Minnesota Statutes and Rules. Additional federal, state and local regulations may apply.

If you require this document in another format, such as large print, Braille or cassette tape, call 651-201-4620 • 800-657-3908 • MDH TTY 651-201-5797