BASIC STEPS TO PREVENTING LEAD POISONING

Have your children screened by a doctor or clinic:
- At ages one and two.
- Annually or more often until age six if they are at increased risk.

Protect your children from lead in the soil they play in:
- Wash children's hands when they come inside from playing outdoors.
- Have children play in grassy areas or a clean sandbox.
- Keep children away from soil by planting shrubs near the house and covering the soil in other areas.

Control lead in your garden:
- Plant as far as possible from the road and from any building that is or was ever painted with lead-based paint.
- Find out whether the land was lot's had any painted buildings on it.
- Wash or peel fruits and vegetables before eating them.

Note: This is especially important when growing root and leaf crops.

Be careful of lead-based paint:
- Test the paint in any home built before 1978 (or painted with old paint).
- Older homes (especially pre-1950) tend to have more lead in the paint.

To reduce the danger:
- Wet wipe and wash floors and other hard surfaces accessible to children (window sills, low shelves, etc.) regularly. Do not dust, sweep, or (regular) vacuum.
- Replace carpets with washable area rugs, or clean professionally or with a HEPA-vacuum.
- Wash children's hands before eating and sleeping and after outdoor play.
- Keep children from chewing on painted surfaces.
- Wash toys and pacifiers.
- Cover up or repair peeling paint.

To remove the hazard:
- Remove lead paint, or
- Permanently cover painted surfaces.

Note: Work should be done by a certified lead abatement contractor.

If you work with lead, protect your family from lead dust exposure:
- Wash your hands well.
- Change your clothes and remove your shoes before entering your family's living space.
- Launder work clothes separately.

Provide children regular meals and snacks that are:
- Low in fat
- High in calcium
- High in iron
- High in zinc
- High in vitamin C.

Avoid lead from ceramics:
If ceramics are not fired at high enough temperatures, the lead in the glaze may contaminate food. To avoid this danger:
- Do not use old, homemade or imported ceramics for storing soft or acidic foods or liquids (such as tomato sauce, fruit juice, tea or coffee) unless the ceramics are tested for lead.
- Do not use ceramics for food if they are chipped or show a chalky gray residue after washing.
- Do not use ceramics for food if they are marked “For Decorative Purposes Only.”

Watch out for lead in your drinking water:
- Ask your water supplier if you are serviced by lead pipes.
- Check for lead solder in your plumbing.
- Test your drinking water.

To reduce the hazard, if your water contains high levels of lead:
- Run the water for a couple of minutes before using it for drinking or cooking.
- Use cold water for drinking, cooking and preparing baby formulas.
- Use a drinking water filter.

Be aware of other sources of lead, including:
- Ammunition
- Fishing sinkers and curtain weights
- Printed designs on bread wrappers, drinking glasses, old wallpaper, and imported T-shirts
- Imported mini-blinds
- Imported crayons and art materials
- Some vinyl and PVC products (such as toys, cables to electronic toys, and children’s raincoats)
- Old painted furniture and toys.
LEAD POISONING AND YOU

Hundreds of thousands of American children of all ethnic backgrounds have dangerously high blood lead levels.

Lead poisoning harms children

Childhood exposure to lead—even at levels that were previously considered safe—can lower intelligence and cause behavior problems and learning disorders. Damage can occur even though there are no apparent outward symptoms.

Lead poisoning damages the brains of young children as they are developing. High levels of lead in a child's blood can also cause anemia, hearing loss and kidney damage, and can interfere with a child's growth.

Your home may not be safe for children

About half of American houses and apartments still contain lead-based paint. Older homes are more likely to contain lead, and when the property is poorly maintained, it is more dangerous.

Understanding the sources of lead and how to control them can help protect your child.

How children get lead poisoned

Children do not have to eat paint chips or chew on window sills to be lead poisoned. They can be poisoned from house dust that is contaminated with lead from normal wear and tear of paint on woodwork, especially windows. When two surfaces painted with lead-based paint rub together, the friction creates fine lead dust, which settles on the floor and other hard surfaces in the home.

Other sources of lead in the environment include soil, tap water, ceramics, fishing sinkers, ammunition, imported mini-blinds, and dust that is brought into the home from a household member's work or hobby.

For a fuller explanation of lead poisoning and its prevention, read:

Little Moccasins:
A Lead Poisoning Prevention Manual for Tribal Day Cares and Families

(Panel of the US EPA "First Steps" Program)

- Illustrated by Native American artist, Antowine Warrior (Sac Fox Tribe).
- Includes input from tribal members and educational and environmental staff.
- Explains screening, healthful diet and basic preventive steps.
- Lists regulations and resources on lead poisoning.
- Contains songs, recipes, and a variety of other types of activities to be used in a day care setting.
- Funded by US EPA, Region I, Jim Bryson Regional Abatement Coordinator, Project Director

To order a copy of the Little Moccasins Manual, CD and Video contact:

Jim Bryson, Project Director
US EPA, Office of Ecosystem Protection -- Region I
JFK Building
One Congress St.
Boston, MA 02203
(617-565-3836).

For additional resources:

- Contact your tribal health department or call your state’s department of public health and ask for the childhood lead poisoning prevention program.

Call the federal toll-free information line at 1-800-LEAD-FYI.

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