What Will Happen if Your Child is Lead-Poisoned?

A worker from a local health or housing agency or the Iowa Department of Public Health may visit you, depending on the child’s blood lead level.

They will show you where your child is being exposed to lead. They will also explain how to take care of the problem.

How Can You Protect Your Child From Lead Poisoning?

Most children are lead-poisoned from dust from peeling or chipping paint. Be sure to check and clean:

- Window areas (between the storm window and the inside window sash)
- Outdoor play areas
- Floors
- Porch areas

Check your home and other homes where your child visits.

Check the Consumer Product Safety Commission for recalled toys or jewelry. Information can be found at http://www.cpsc.gov/

Maintain a clean play area, wash your child’s hands before meals and snacks. Also wash your child’s toys, blankets, or pacifiers often.

If you plan to do any painting or remodeling in a pre-1960 home, find out how to do the work safely.

Where Can You Get More Information?

For more information about lead poisoning and how you can protect your children, contact one of the following agencies:

Iowa Department of Public Health
1 (800) 972-2026

Your local city or county health department or housing agency

Lead Poisoning: How to Protect Iowa Families

is a booklet that will help you find the lead hazards in your home.

Visit the Iowa Department of Public Health website at http://www.idph.state.ia.us/LPP/Resources.aspx to download a copy of the booklet and other helpful resources

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Iowa Department of Public Health
Lucas State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319-0075

Iowa Department of Public Health
Promoting and protecting the health of Iowans
What Is Childhood Lead Poisoning?

Childhood lead poisoning is a disease that occurs when children have too much lead in their bodies. Experts currently reference a level of 5 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL) to identify children with higher blood lead levels than other children.

How do Children Become Lead-Poisoned?

Children become lead-poisoned if they:

- Put lead-based paint chips in their mouths.
- Put dusty or dirty hands, toys, bottles, or pacifiers in their mouths.
- Chew on surfaces painted with lead-based paint, including some jewelry or household decor.
- Play in dirt or a sandbox near an old building or where an old building was torn down.
- Breathe in dust or vapors from lead-based paint that is being sanded, scraped, or removed with a heat gun during renovation of the home.

Could Your Child Be Lead-Poisoned?

Yes — most children with lead poisoning do not look sick. Lead-poisoned children may:

- Be easily excited.
- Have problems paying attention.
- Complain of stomach aches and headaches.
- Be more tired than usual.

Lead-poisoned children may have learning problems when they start school. Children with very high levels of lead may have severe brain damage or even die.

How Common is Lead Poisoning?

Iowa’s rate of lead poisoning is still a significant problem.

Children under the age of 6 are most likely to be affected.

Lead poisoning is usually caused by lead-based paint found in homes built before 1960. About 45% of the homes in Iowa, both in urban and rural areas, were built before 1960.

How Can You Tell if Your Child is Lead-Poisoned?

The only way to tell if your child is lead-poisoned is to have their blood tested. All Iowa children must be tested for lead poisoning before starting kindergarten.

The Iowa Department of Public Health recommends that children be tested for the first time at the age of 12 months. Ask your health care provider to do a blood lead test whenever your child has a check-up. All Iowa children under the age of 6 years should be regularly tested.

This test is required for children who are covered by Medicaid. Many insurance plans also pay for this test.

How Often Should Your Child Be Tested for Lead Poisoning?

It’s important to get their blood lead level tested at least once a year until they are six years old.

Many children have normal blood lead levels at 6-12 months of age.

However, these same children may become lead-poisoned when they are older and more active.