

Austin guide to...

LEAD *contamination*

Lead is a bluish-gray metal that is found naturally in our environment. Lead has been used over the years in many products including car batteries, gasoline, paint and pipes. Because of health concerns, the federal government has regulated the use of many lead products in the last thirty years.



How are we most typically exposed?

- **Direct exposure to lead dust from chipping or peeling lead-based paint (in homes built before 1978) or lead-based pottery**
- **Drinking water that has been contaminated by old plumbing containing solder**
- **Lead dust and contaminated soil from products containing lead that have been disposed of in landfills and dumping sites (US EPA recommends further evaluation of residential soil that exceeds 400 parts per million of lead)**
- **Folk remedies and herbal medicines that contain lead**
- **Exposure to lead at work or through hobbies**



**WATERSHED
PROTECTION**

974-2550

Who is at particular risk?

- **Children:**
 - Those under the age of six are at highest risk because their nervous systems are not yet fully developed
 - Children are more likely to place dirty hands or objects in their mouths
 - Children are more likely to eat non-food items such as paint chips or dirt
- **Adults who work in the battery manufacturing, steel welding, plastics, soldering and printing industries**

What are some of the health effects?

- **In Children:**
 - Damage to the brain and nervous system
 - Learning and behavior problems
 - Slowed growth
 - Headaches
- **In Adults:**
 - Reproductive problems in men and women
 - High blood pressure
 - Nerve disorders
 - Memory and concentration problems

How can you protect your family?

- **Damp mop or clean floors and other household surfaces with warm water and low-phosphate detergent to remove lead dust**
- **Wash hands and face often, especially before eating or drinking**
- **Keep children's play areas and toys clean**
- **Clean or remove shoes before entering the house**
- **Consider leaving pets outdoors**
- **Eat a healthy diet of low-fat meals that are high in calcium and iron**
- **Avoid using home remedies such as Azarcon, Greta or Reuda**

Concerned about your family's exposure to lead?

Consult your physician - a simple blood test will determine lead levels

Resources:

- **US Environmental Protection Agency:
www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/leadinfo.htm**
- **US Department of Health and Human Services:
1-888-422-8737 or www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq.html**