



MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Your public health team, connecting with our communities to achieve healthier outcomes

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Get the lead out

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- Lead is a naturally occurring metal that is found just about everywhere. Low levels of lead can be found in the soil, in our food, in the air we breathe, in the water we drink, and in the things we touch. Most often, lead from these sources isn't cause for concern, but sometimes higher levels of lead are present, and can be harmful. If you think you or a member of your family may have been exposed to high levels of lead, it's important to get tested right away.

The majority of people with lead poisoning live in or spend a lot of time in a home built before 1978. Lead can be found in an older home's drinking water if it is supplied by lead pipes and plumbing fixtures. But usually, the culprit is lead-based paint, which can be toxic, especially to a young child. The older the home, the more likely it is to contain lead-based paint.

The most common places for lead-based paint to be lurking are in windows, cupboards, doors, porches, and outdoor surfaces. Something as simple as opening and closing a window painted with lead-based paint can send lead dust into the air. Once airborne, lead dust settles to the floor and gets on children's hands and toys. The lead dust then enters their bodies when they put their hands or toys into their mouths.

Lead exposure can affect nearly every system in the body. And because it often occurs with no obvious symptoms, it frequently goes unrecognized. A lead-poisoned child may seem healthy, but they could have any of the following signs: learning and behavior problems, headaches, weight loss, irritability, tiredness, hearing problems and hyperactivity.

What can you do to reduce your child's exposure to lead? First and foremost, before you buy an older home, ask for a lead inspection. Then, get your child tested, even if your young child seems healthy. Ask your family doctor or pediatrician to do a lead blood test on your child at one and two years of age, or more often, depending on their contact with sources of lead. Medicaid will pay for the cost of the test if your child is enrolled. If you have private insurance, coverage may vary.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department also offers lead blood tests to children enrolled in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. For more information, call 989-224-2195 in Clinton County, 989-875-3681 in Gratiot County, and 989-831-5237 in Montcalm County.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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