

## **Prenatal-risk Assessment of Lead Exposure:**

Testing is only recommended for women who are at risk. If a woman answers “yes” to any of these questions, she is at risk for lead exposure and should have a blood lead test.

1. Do you live with someone who has an elevated blood lead level or have you ever had an elevated blood lead level?  
If yes, who?
2. Do you live in a house built before 1978 with ongoing renovations that generate a lot of dust from sanding and scraping?
3. Sometimes pregnant women have the urge to eat things, which are not food, such as clay, soil, pottery, plaster or paint chips. Have you eaten something that is not a food during this pregnancy?
4. Do you use any imported or homemade health remedies, spices, foods, ceramics?
5. Do you or others in your household have an occupation, hobby or activity which may expose you to lead?
6. Were you born, or have you spent any time, outside of the United States? (Many identified lead-poisoned pregnant women are foreign born).

*For more information,  
contact:*



IDPH  
Illinois Lead Program  
525 W. Jefferson St.  
Springfield, IL 62761  
217-782-3517  
866-909-3572  
TTY: 800-547-0466  
*(hearing impaired use only)*



**1-800-222-1222**  
Illinois Poison Center  
(800) 222-1222

*Pregnant  
women*

*and*

**LEAD  
POISONING**

**HOW TO PROTECT  
YOUR  
UNBORN CHILD**

# *Your baby is counting on you*

## **FOR A HEALTHY START**

### **What is lead poisoning?**

Lead is a metal which causes harm when it enters the body. Lead poisoning can be harmful at any level to you and your unborn baby.

### **How does lead get into the body?**

Lead is inhaled or eaten and is then stored in the body, mostly in bone.

Pregnant women, who eat non-food items, such as clay, soil, pottery, plaster or paint chips, may eat lead, if these items have lead in them.

Women who have had lead poisoning when they were younger can still have lead in their bodies. Tell your doctor if you had lead poisoning in the past.

### **How can lead affect your unborn child?**

Lead stored in your body can be released from your bones and passed to your unborn child.

Possible affects on your unborn child may include:

- Damage to the developing brain
- Being born too soon
- Slowed growth
- Learning and behavior problems

### **How can lead affect a pregnant woman?**

Possible affects to a pregnant women:

- High blood pressure
- Miscarriage

### **What are the common sources of lead?**

- Lead-based paint – used on homes built before 1978 – especially on windows, porches and outside surfaces and any surface that is chipping and peeling
- Dust and soil, contaminated by lead
- Hobbies that involve the use of lead (leaded stained glass, fishing weights and ammunition)
- Occupations that involve the use of lead (home renovations/restorations, automotive paint restorations and repairs, battery manufacturing, brass or copper foundry, bridge repair)
- Tap water (lead pipes and solder)
- Glazed pottery (some glazes contain lead)
- Folk remedies and cosmetics produced outside the United States
- Some food, food additives and candy from outside the United States
- Some food packaging from outside the United States

**Discuss adequate nutrition with your doctor, nurse or nutritionist.**

**You may need to add vitamin and calcium supplements to your diet to get enough. Talk to your doctor about this first.**

### **What can you do to lower exposure to lead poisoning?**

- Avoid eating non-food items
- Avoid exposures during home repair or furniture restorations — stay away until repairs are done and work areas are clean
- Have someone else do the clean-up after any home renovations
- Protect yourself from occupations and hobbies that may involve lead exposures
- Wash lead contaminated clothing separately from family laundry
- Wash hands well and often
- Use lead-free dishes
- Stop smoking, an oral behavior which increases lead exposures through hand to mouth activity
- Avoid using health remedies, foods, spices and cosmetics from other countries as some of these products may contain lead
- Get plenty of iron, calcium and vitamin C, and vitamin D every day from foods or vitamin supplements. Good sources are:
  - Iron. Fortified cereals and breads, lean red meats, tofu and raisins
  - Calcium. Milk (includes whole, skimmed, 1% and 2%), yogurt, cheese, calcium fortified orange juice, tofu, almonds and soynuts
  - Vitamin C. oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, papaya, mangoes, cantaloupe, tomatoes, strawberries, kiwi, broccoli, sweet potatoes, bell and chili peppers and fruit juices (Eating one of these suggested fruits at every meal increases the absorption of iron from other foods).
  - Vitamin D. Fortified milk, fortified yogurts and cottage cheese, eggs, some varieties of fish and pacific oysters