

Parent Plus: Prevention is best protection against childhood lead poisoning

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Lead poisoning made national news in 2015 when many young children in Flint, Mich., tested positive for lead after drinking contaminated city water. Other cities and schools across the nation recently have found lead in their water supplies as well.

More than half a million U.S. children under age 5 have been exposed to lead. There is no safe level of exposure, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Lead commonly lurks in lead paint, dust, soil and water. Ceramics, jewelry, cosmetics, spices, imported candies from Mexico that contain tamarind or chili powder and imported or antique toys also may contain lead.

Children exposed to lead may have headaches, constipation or hearing loss, or they may show no symptoms right away. They can have trouble in school and have a lower IQ. About one in five cases of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder have been linked to lead exposure in children, according to an AAP report. Mothers who drink or eat lead-contaminated products can pass lead to their baby when pregnant or breastfeeding.

Prevention is the best way to protect children. Parents can do the following:

- If your home was built before 1960, have it tested for lead before remodeling. Lead can be found in chipped paint and paint dust in the home and on windowsills.
- If you suspect lead is in your home's water, ask your local water provider to show you test results. Do not allow children to drink water contaminated with lead or mix formula with tap water suspected to contain lead.
- Have children wash their hands after they play in the soil or garden and before eating.
- Do not allow children to put objects into their mouths that may contain lead.
- Regularly check children's product recalls (<http://bit.ly/1ZgTIJk>). Lead has been found in children's toy jewelry and the paint or plastic on imported toys.

Your pediatrician will determine whether screening your child for lead with a blood test is necessary.

If a child has been exposed to lead, it is important to make sure that she receives routine care from her pediatrician to monitor her learning abilities and behavior.



For details about blood lead screening, visit <http://bit.ly/1LOc1jI>. Find information on lead prevention for pregnant and breastfeeding women at <http://bit.ly/1OPU97w>.

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- [AAP News story "Boost efforts to reduce lead poisoning before children are exposed: AAP policy"](#)

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