



poison prevention



There can be things inside your home that can harm your child. There can also be hazards found in the dust and dirt in or around your home and yard. The following are examples of hazards found where children live and what you can do about them.

ASBESTOS

Asbestos is a natural fiber that was often used for fireproofing, insulating, and soundproofing between the 1940s and 1970s. Asbestos is only dangerous when it becomes crumbly. If that happens, asbestos fibers get into the air and are breathed into the lungs. Breathing in these fibers can cause chronic health problems, including a rare form of lung cancer. Asbestos can still be found in some older homes, often as insulation around pipes.

What You Can Do

- Don't allow children to play near exposed or crumbling materials that may contain asbestos.
- If you think there is asbestos in your home, have an expert look at it.
- If your home has asbestos, use a certified contractor to help solve the problem. You could have more problems if the asbestos isn't contained or removed safely.

CARBON MONOXIDE

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a toxic gas that has no taste, no color, and no odor. It comes from appliances or heaters that burn gas, oil, wood, propane, or kerosene. Carbon monoxide poisoning is very dangerous. If left unchecked, exposure to CO can lead to memory loss, personality changes, brain damage, and death.

What You Can Do

- Call the Poison Help number at 1-800-222-1222 if you suspect CO poisoning.
- See your doctor right away if everyone in your house has flu-like symptoms (headache, fatigue, nausea) at the same time, especially if the symptoms go away when you leave the house.
- Put CO detectors on each floor in your home.
- Never leave a car running in an attached garage, even if the garage door is open.
- Have furnaces, wood stoves, fireplaces, and gas-fired water heaters, ovens, ranges and clothes dryers checked and serviced each year.

HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

Many cleaning products give off dangerous fumes or leave residues. These products can be harmful if they are not thrown out properly (for example, if they are left in the garage).

What You Can Do

- Only use these products when needed.
- Always have enough ventilation when using these products.
- Store them in a safe place.
- Bring empty containers to your local hazardous waste disposal center.

LEAD

Lead is one of the most serious environmental problems to children. Your child can get lead in her body if she swallows lead dust, breathes lead vapors, or eats soil or paint chips that have lead in them. Lead poisoning can cause learning disabilities, behavioral problems, anemia, or damage to the brain and kidneys.

Lead is most often found in:

- Paint that is on the inside and outside of homes built before 1978
- Dust and paint chips from old paint
- Soil that has lead in it (particularly around older homes or by businesses that used lead)
- Hobby materials such as paints, solders, fishing weights and buckshot
- Food stored in certain ceramic dishes (especially if dishes were made in another country)
- Older painted toys and furniture such as cribs
- Tap water, especially in homes that have lead solder on pipes
- Mini-blinds manufactured outside the United States before July 1997
- A child who has high lead levels may not look or act sick. The only way to know if your child has lead in her body is with a blood test.

What You Can Do

- If your home was built before 1978, test the paint for lead. If lead paint is found, get expert advice on how to repair it safely. Unsafe repairs can increase your child's risk for exposure to lead.
- Don't scrape or sand paint that may have lead in it.
- Clean painted areas with soap and water and cover peeling, flaking, or chipping paint with new paint, duct tape, or contact paper.
- Make sure painted areas are repaired before putting cribs, playpens, beds, or highchairs next to them.
- Check with your health department to see if the water in your area contains lead.
- Always use cold water for mixing formula, cooking, and drinking. Run the water for one to two minutes before each use.
- Ask your pediatrician if your child needs a lead test. A blood test is the only accurate way to test for lead poisoning.
- Encourage your child to wash his hands often, especially before eating.
- Give your child a healthy diet with the right amounts of iron and calcium.
- Before moving into a home or apartment, check for possible lead problems.
- Never live in an old house while it's being renovated.

Lead Screening for Children

The only way to know for sure if your child has been exposed to lead is with a blood test. Lead screening tests sometimes take blood from the finger, but it is better and more accurate to take the blood from a vein in the arm. The test measures the amount of lead in the blood. If you think that your child has been exposed to lead, talk with your pediatrician about getting a blood test to check for lead.

Other Things You Can Do

- Test your home for lead. If your home was built before 1978, talk with your local health department about getting your home tested for lead. Homes in the Northeast and Midwest are most likely to have lead in paint. Ask the landlord about lead before you sign a lease. Before you buy a home, have it inspected for lead.
- Before any work is done on your home, learn about safe ways to make repairs. When repairs are being done, seal off the area until the job is done and keep your child away until everything is cleaned up.
- Keep your children away from old windows, old porches, and areas with chipping or peeling paint. Landlords are legally required to repair lead problems found on their property.
- Do not allow your child to play in the dirt next to your old home. Plant grass over bare soil or use mulch or wood chips.
- Teach your children to wash their hands, especially before eating. Wash pacifiers and toys regularly.
- Keep clean. If your work or hobbies involve lead, change your clothes and shoes and shower when finished.

MOLDS

Molds grow almost anywhere and can be found in any part of a home. Common places where molds grow include the following:

- Damp basements
- Closets
- Showers and tubs
- Refrigerators
- Air conditioners and humidifiers
- Garbage pails
- Mattresses
- Carpets (especially if wet)

Children who live in moldy places are more likely to develop allergies, asthma, and other health problems.

What You Can Do

- Keep the surfaces in your home dry.
- Throw away wet carpets that can't be dried.
- Keep air conditioners and humidifiers clean and in good working order.
- Use exhaust fans in the kitchen and the bathroom to help keep the air dry.
- Avoid using items that are likely to get moldy, like foam rubber pillows and mattresses.