

# **Pregnancy and Lead Poisoning**



**What Every Woman  
Should Know**

# **Lead is a poison. It can harm you and your unborn baby.**

It can cause:

- High blood pressure in a pregnant woman
- Miscarriage
- Babies born too soon or too small
- Learning and behavior problems in a child.

**You can get lead poisoning** by breathing in lead dust or by eating foods or non-food items that have lead in them. The lead goes into your blood and other parts of your body. Sometimes women who had lead poisoning when they were younger still have lead in their bodies. When you are pregnant, the lead in your body can be carried to your unborn baby.

## **Ask your doctor about a blood lead test.**

**A blood lead test is the only way to find out if you have lead poisoning.**

You usually do not look or feel sick.

**At your first doctor's visit when you're pregnant:**

- Your doctor should ask about your recent or past exposure to lead.
- If you were exposed to lead, your doctor should do a blood test.

- If you had lead poisoning when you were younger, tell your doctor.

## **Protect yourself and your unborn baby.**

### **Keep away from lead**

- Avoid using health remedies, foods, spices, and cosmetics from other countries. They are more likely to contain lead than products made in the U.S.
- Avoid using clay pots and dishes from other countries to cook, serve, or store food.
- Never eat non-food items such as clay, pottery, soil or paint chips.
- Stay away from repair work being done in your home.
- Avoid jobs and hobbies that may involve contact with lead.

### **Eat a healthy diet**

Talk to your doctor to make sure you are getting enough calcium, iron, and vitamin C.



- **Some foods with calcium** – Milk, cheese, yogurt, spinach, collards, tofu, salmon, ice cream
- **Some foods with iron** – Lean red meat, chicken, eggs, tuna, lentils, beans, peas, prunes, raisins, broccoli, spinach
- **Some foods with vitamin C** – Oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, kiwi, fruit juices, peppers, broccoli, tomatoes



## **Make your home safe.**

**Lead dust is the most common cause of lead poisoning in children.** When lead paint chips or peels, it turns into dust. This dust mixes with household dust and lands on floors, windowsills, and toys. When children put their hands and toys in their mouths, they can swallow the dust.



## Protect your children

- Use cold tap water for making baby formula or baby cereal, and for drinking or cooking. Lead can get into water through old plumbing.
- Report peeling or damaged paint to your landlord. Your landlord must safely fix peeling paint. If this does not happen, call 311 for help.
- Keep children away from peeling paint and home repairs.
- Wash floors and windowsills often. Wash children's hands and toys too.
- Remove shoes before entering your home.
- Wash work clothes separately from the family laundry if someone in your household works with lead.
- **Tell your doctor to test your child for lead poisoning at age 1 and age 2.** Older children should be tested too if you think they have had contact with lead.



**For more information  
about lead poisoning:**

**Call 311**



The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor  
Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner

