

# Lead Paint Disclosures and Facts

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## Buying a Home that Might Contain Lead Paint

### Lead in Homes Built Before 1978

One source of exposure to lead is the lead-based paint that was often used in homes that were built prior to 1978, when the Federal Government banned lead paint in residential structures. Federal regulations require that home sellers provide lead disclosures to home buyers who are purchasing a home built before that year.

### Lead Can Affect Health

Disclosures are required because lead is a potential health risk. Depending on the level of exposure, lead can cause damage to the brain and nervous system, behavior problems, slowed growth, headaches, difficulties during pregnancy, high blood pressure, digestive problems and muscle and joint pain.

Lead can affect everyone in the family, but children are often at highest risk, especially small children who don't hesitate to put things in their mouths--like paint chips that could contain lead.

### Lead Paint Disclosures

- Sellers must disclose in writing any information about known lead paint in the home. If sellers have performed lead tests, they must share the test results.
- Sales contracts must give buyers up to 10 days to check for lead hazards. Home buyers aren't required to test for lead--but they must be given the opportunity to do so. You might see this information on a special addendum attached to the contract.
- Home sellers or real estate agents must give home buyers a copy of the EPA publication "Protect Your Family From Lead in Your Home."
- Similar lead disclosure regulations apply to the relationship between landlords and tenants of buildings built before 1978.
- **Stay Alert for Potential Problems**

Lead paint that is intact--with no cracking, chipping or wear--is considered unlikely to pose health risks, but if your home might contain lead paints, watch for:

- Peeling, chipping, or cracking paints.
- Areas susceptible to wear and tear that causes cracking or exposure to underlying layers of paints on stair railings, banisters, window sills, door frames, porches and fences.
- Lead dust that results when paint is sanded or dry scraped.
- Lead in the soil surrounding your home, caused by flaking lead paints on its exterior, since it's a risk to children playing outdoors and in a prime spot to be tracked inside on shoes.

### Other Sources of Lead

Lead paint isn't the only potential source of lead in your home.

- Lead is sometimes found in drinking water when plumbing contains lead or lead solder. You should test the water for lead, since it cannot be detected by taste or smell.
- Old painted toys or furniture.
- Industries that release lead into the air.
- Hobbies that use items containing lead, such as stained glass work, pottery and furniture refinishing.

## What Can You Do About Lead?

### Temporary Controls

- Temporarily reduce lead hazards by repairing damaged painted surfaces and planting new grass to cover soil that could contain high lead levels.
- Clean up paint chips right away.
- Clean painted surfaces weekly, then thoroughly rinse your cleaning tools.
- Wash children's hands frequently; wash toys and other items they play with regularly.
- Keep children from chewing on painted surfaces.
- Eat nutritious meals that are high in iron and calcium. Children and adults with good diets absorb less lead.

### Permanent Lead Removal

- Permanent lead removal requires work by a *certified* lead abatement contractor who will remove lead paint or seal and enclose it with special materials.

Be sure to follow the [EPA's guidelines](#) if you plan to remodel or renovate a home built prior to 1978.

Lead testing may be common in some areas, but I have never met a home seller who has tested for the presence of lead paints, so don't be alarmed or suspicious if your seller has no lead paint information to share with you.

Although lead paint creates a risk, for most of us its presence isn't enough to keep us from buying a home we love--we know what to watch for and we deal with it.

Visit the [EPA's Web site](#) for in-depth information about identifying lead hazards in the environment and in your home.

### Related Articles

- [Remodeling or Renovating a Home with Lead-Based Paint](#)
- [How do I protect my kids from lead poisoning?](#)
- [Lead Poisoning Risks from Lead Paint](#)
- [Lead Poisoning Risk Factors](#)
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[Real Estate Lead Base Paint Disclosure](#)