Sources of Lead

Lead Tipsheet #3

July 2012

The most common cause of childhood lead poisoning in Maine is dust from lead paint.

Each year more than 100 of Maine's children are poisoned by lead. Lead dust collects on floors and other surfaces where children put their hands and play with toys. Children, especially those under 3, often put their hands and toys into their mouths. This makes it very easy for lead dust to get into, and damage, their growing bodies.

Lead Dust from Lead Paint

As leaded paint gets old and breaks down, lead dust can build up on window sills and floors in your house. This lead dust can remain in your home for a long time. Areas where lead paint rubs, such as door frames, windows, or even floors where you walk, can produce lead dust.

Lead dust can also come from home repairs and renovations. If you sand, scrape or disturb lead paint you can make lead dust. If you work on someone else's house that has lead paint, you can bring that lead dust into your home and car. Each time you bring lead dust home, more lead is in your house.

Lead from Other Sources

Lead paint is the most common source of lead poisoning. Sometimes, other sources of lead can be important.

Soil, especially next to old buildings. If lead paint was used on the outside of a building, lead chips or lead dust may be in the soil near the building. This can cause lead poisoning as some children get dirt on their hands, and then into their mouths. Have your children play on the grass or in a sandbox and keep them away from bare soil or dirt piles. Use a door mat to keep lead dust out of the house. See Tipsheet 4, **Testing my Home for Lead**, to learn how to test soil.

Hobbies. Some hobbies expose you to lead. Examples are: making stained glass, casting lead fishing sinkers, making your own ammunition (reloading) or refinishing furniture. If your hobby exposes you to lead, use special hobby clothes and wash them separately, wash your hands with soap and keep your children away from these activities.

Antiques or old painted furniture and toys.Any paint used before 1978 could contain lead. Paint made before 1950 contains the most lead. Make sure any antiques or painted old toys are in good condition (no chipping or peeling paint) and keep them out of reach of children.

Water. Lead from brass, lead solder or lead pipes can dissolve in some water. Drink from the cold water tap and run the water for awhile before filling your glass. If you have your own well, test your water - see wellwater.maine.gov to learn how.

Toys & Other Products. It is rare that a child is hurt by lead in toys. You can check cpsc.gov to learn about toy and product recalls. Some folk or herbal remedies also contain lead. Don't give your children supplements unless your doctor tells you to.

Protect your family.

- Check this website: maine.gov/healthyhomes
- Call for advice: **866-292-3474 • TTY: Call Maine Relay 711**

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
An Office of the Department of Health and Human Services
Paul R. LePage, Governor
Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner