**What you need to know**

**TENNESSEE CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING PREVENTION PROGRAM**

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**PREVENTION TIPS:**

- Keep painted surfaces in good repair, paying particular attention to doors and windowsills.
- Clean floors, windowsills and other hard surfaces with soap and water weekly or more frequently.
- Wash your children’s hands, bottles, cups and pacifiers often — and always before eating and drinking. Wash their toys regularly, as well.
- Avoid leaded crystal, older dishes and imported ceramics.
- Serve healthy meals and snacks. Foods rich in calcium, iron and Vitamin C help reduce lead absorption.
- Encourage outside play in grassy areas, avoiding bare soil around the home’s foundation.
- Consult a professional before considering any renovations in a home that contains lead-based paint.

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**WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?**

Your local health department

Tennessee Department of Health
health.state.tn.us/MCH/lead.shtml
health.state.tn.us/environmental/lead.htm

Tennessee Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
865-974-8178
fcs.tennessee.edu/lead

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation

Your local UT Extension Office

ag.tennessee.edu

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**WHY IS LEAD POISONING CONSIDERED PREVENTABLE?**

You can protect yourself and your children, even in an older home, by avoiding the sources of lead and observing some basic cleaning principles.
WHAT IS LEAD POISONING?

Lead poisoning is the No. 1 environmental threat to the health of America’s children. People of all ages can be affected by lead poisoning, but young children, those 6 years of age and under, as well as pregnant women, are particularly vulnerable, as lead negatively impacts brain development.

Lead causes a number of serious health problems, the most devastating of which is **irreversible brain damage**.

Other health issues include:
- Diminished hearing
- Kidney damage
- High blood pressure
- Digestive disorders
- Learning disabilities
- Behavioral problems

More often than not, children can be lead poisoned and show no outward signs of illness. That is why it is so important to know the facts about lead poisoning.

HOW ARE CHILDREN POISONED BY LEAD?

Children can encounter lead in many different ways, but the most common source is **lead-based paint**. Lead was routinely added to paint until the 1970s, when a growing awareness of its toxic nature resulted in a ban on lead-based house paint in 1978. As a result, any home built prior to 1978 may contain lead-based paint.

As paint ages, it can chip, peel and break down into a fine, powdery **dust** that you cannot see. This dust can enter the body through:
- **Ingestion (swallowing)**
- **Inhalation (breathing in)**

Once lead enters the body, it is then stored in the bones.

 WHEN SHOULD MY CHILD BE TESTED FOR LEAD POISONING?

All children under the age of 6 should be routinely tested for lead poisoning, preferably during their 12- and 24-month well-child checks. The procedure is quick and simple and can be conducted at your doctor’s office or local health clinic.

Adult hobbies related to fishing, shooting and glassmaking carry a risk of lead poisoning. Parents who work in an industry that involves lead are cautioned to change clothes and shoes before going home.