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Assemblymember  
John T. McDonald III



Dear Friend,

Lead poisoning is preventable but continues to be a major children's environmental problem in the country and in the state, according to New York State's 2009 Preliminary Report from the Task Force on Prevention of Childhood Lead Poisoning. The state consistently ranks high on key risk factors associated with lead poisoning, including children living in poverty, a large immigrant population and an older, deteriorated housing stock. While the overall incidence of lead poisoning among the state's children younger than age 6 has declined over the last several years, thousands of children are still at risk.

This brochure explains how you can prevent lead poisoning in your children. If you have any questions on this or any other issue, please contact my office.

Sincerely,

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Member of Assembly

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## Lead Poisoning...

*Could your children be at risk?*

## What is lead poisoning in children?

Lead poisoning is a serious health problem affecting thousands of children each year. Children younger than 6 years are more likely to get lead poisoning than any other age group from breathing in or swallowing dust from old lead paint that gets on floors and windowsills, hands and toys. Lead can also be passed from mother to baby during pregnancy.

The symptoms of lead poisoning can be hard to recognize, but its long-term effects can be very serious. It can slow a child's growth and development, cause mental retardation, kidney disease, blindness and even death. Lead poisoning can be treated, but it's best to prevent it.

## What causes lead poisoning?

Eating, drinking or breathing anything with too much lead in it can contribute to lead poisoning. One of the most common sources of lead poisoning is paint chips from homes built before 1978, when lead-based paint was used. Children are poisoned by putting paint chips in their mouths, breathing in household dust containing tiny lead-paint particles or putting dirty fingers and other things with lead dust on them in their mouths.

Tap water from homes with plumbing fixtures containing lead also accounts for exposure to lead. Hot tap water should never be used for drinking or cooking because the heat causes lead in the piping to leach into the water. Always use cold tap water for these purposes. Lead may also be found in water and soil. Some imported ceramics, crystal, earthenware or pottery dishes, home remedies, cosmetics and food cans also may contain lead.

## How can you tell if your child has lead poisoning?

Most of the time there aren't any symptoms. Warning signs, such as headaches, stomach aches, tiredness, paleness, crankiness, or a change in appetite, could easily be mistaken for other common childhood problems. The most common test for lead is a blood test.

## Have your child tested

Call your Health Department at:

Albany County:  
518-447-4580

Rensselaer County:  
518-270-2626

Saratoga County:  
518 793-3893

## For More Information

National Lead Information Center  
800-424-LEAD  
800-424-5323

NYS Dept. of Health website:  
[www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/](http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/)

NYS Dept. of Health Center for Environmental Health Information Line  
800-458-1158

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Hotline  
800-638-2772

## Who should be tested?

New York State requires health care providers to test all children for lead with a blood lead test at age 1 and again at age 2. Up to age 6, health care providers must ask parents about any contact their child might have had with lead and test again if necessary. Be proactive. Ask about the test and the results.

## What if your child has lead poisoning?

Your doctor will decide what type of treatment is needed. Your child may be treated with iron, which helps prevent lead from being absorbed by the body. More tests may be ordered so the doctor can see if any organs have been damaged. Your doctor may treat your child with certain drugs to rid the body of lead. This may need to be done in a hospital.

The sources of lead must also be removed. Your doctor or clinic will ask someone from your local health department to visit your home and help you find the source of lead. Then, your child will need follow-up tests to make sure the lead is gone.

## Can lead poisoning be prevented?

Yes. Here are some tips to help prevent it:

- Children up to 6 years old should be tested regularly
- Wash your hands and your child's hands frequently to rinse off any dust or dirt that may contain lead
- Serve meals high in iron, calcium and vitamin C, such as meat, broccoli, spinach, cheese, milk and citrus fruits to help prevent lead from being absorbed into the body
- Wet mop dusty surfaces regularly
- Remove or cover contaminated soil
- Have tap water tested for lead content
- Use only cold tap water for eating and cooking; lead leaches into hot water

## If you work with lead on the job, don't bring it home:

- Shower and change clothes before going home
- Wash work clothes separately from other laundry

## Can you remove lead paint?

Lead removal is considered a serious problem. If possible, consider hiring or consulting with a professional who knows about lead hazards in the home.

Lead paint in poor condition can be removed or covered with sheetrock, paneling or vinyl wallpaper. Be sure to include window sills, woodwork and all areas within a child's reach. Don't paint over old paint – the lead will still be under the layer of new paint.

## If you do the work yourself, remember:

- The safest way to remove paint is to scrape it off, which limits the dust and makes cleanup easier
- Do not use sanders, heat guns or open flames to remove lead paint because the dust and fumes are poisonous
- Use drop cloths for easy cleanup
- Wear a tight-fitting mask over your mouth and nose to avoid breathing in dust or fumes; wear goggles, gloves and hair and shoe covers
- Keep a window open for fresh air
- Clean the work area every day with a high-phosphate cleaner
- Keep children, nursing and pregnant women, and pets out of the work area
- Wash your hands before eating and do not smoke or eat in the work area

## Some sources of lead in and around the home

- Lead-based paint
- Lead pipes and plumbing fixtures; car batteries, radiators
- Soil and air contaminated by leaded-gas auto emissions and pollution from lead-using industries
- Soil contaminated by lead paint chips
- Food grown in gardens with contaminated soil
- Household dust from lead-paint removal, renovation
- Colored inks used in newspapers and magazines
- Older furniture, such as cribs, and some toys coated with lead paint or lead-based stains; inexpensive children's jewelry,
- some non-glossy mini blinds from foreign countries
- Lead-glazed ceramics, china, leaded crystal glassware
- Imported candies or foods, especially from Mexico, containing chili or tamarind; imported foods in cans sealed with lead solder
- Fumes from burning painted wood and from some printed materials
- Hobbies that involve lead, such as making stained glass, lead sinkers, or bullets
- Some folk remedies, ayurvedics and cosmetics
- Firearms with lead bullets

For more information visit: [www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/](http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/)

## An ounce of prevention...

To prevent lead poisoning and minimize the risk of lead exposure, the New York State Legislature established a lead poisoning prevention program. Pregnant women or children found to be at risk for high-dose lead exposure are screened as part of this program, which also involves appropriate follow-up of pregnant women and children with elevated lead levels. This program is intended to encourage lead

screening and direct families to facilities for screening; it cannot be used to deny children enrollment in day care, nursery or pre-schools.

This program also includes stringent measures to remove lead pipes that supply drinking water. In addition, it sets up guidelines for products that may contain lead, such as children's toys and furniture, crystal, china and ceramic ware.