

ERIE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Lead In Soil

LEAD POISONING PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Did you know...

Erie County has many programs to assist renters, landlords, and property owners with addressing lead hazards and preventing lead poisoning. Contact us today.



PEELING PAINT

Deteriorated lead based paint is one of the biggest sources of lead in the soil around older homes.

Sources: Center for Disease Control, US Environmental Protection Agency, New York State Dept. of Health, Cornell Waste Management Institute

How lead gets in the soil

Lead is a heavy metal that can be found naturally in soil and underground. Urban soils often have higher levels of metals than rural soils because they have been affected by more human activity. If you live in an older home in a city, lead levels in your soil may be higher due to pollution and contamination from paint and industry.

- ◆ Automobile emissions from leaded gasoline, which was used until 1986.
- ◆ Disposal of scrap metal that contains lead, such as old pipes, roof flashing or lead acid car batteries.
- ◆ Use of contaminated fill during building and home construction.



Without testing, it is impossible to tell whether soil in your yard contains hazardous levels of lead.

Sources of higher levels of lead in soil include:

- ◆ Chipping, peeling lead based paint from houses and older buildings built before 1978.

While testing can help determine the amount of lead present, it is best to treat your soil as though it could be hazardous.



Why lead is a health concern

Lead is toxic - especially to young children. Even small amounts can be harmful. Lead affects the body in many ways and can cause brain damage, learning disabilities, developmental delays, hearing loss, behavioral problems, and loss of IQ points. Adults can experience loss of motor control, high blood pressure, headaches, and fertility problems.

bodies by breathing it in or swallowing it. The most common exposure pathway is through lead contaminated house dust from deteriorated paint, or soil tracked in from the outside.

Once absorbed, lead is extremely difficult to remove and can remain in the body for years. Preventing exposure to lead is the best way to avoid lasting harm.

The signs of lead poisoning are not always obvious. A simple blood test can be done to detect lead. New York State Department of Health requires that all children be tested for lead at the age of 1 and 2 and, if determined to be high risk for exposure, tested annually through the age of 5 years old.

People can absorb lead into their

Can the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) test my soil for lead?

Unfortunately not at this time. If you are concerned that your soil may have lead, it is recommended that you use a laboratory certified by the New York State Department of Health. For a list visit <http://www.wadsworth.org/labcert/elap/elap.html>

If you have lead in your soil

Soil in city and urban areas has often been shown to have higher than normal lead content. Lead in soil can become a hazard when grass or other vegetation that would normally cover the area is worn away, exposing bare ground. High traffic areas where children play or people walk can be an exposure source, as can the drip line of a house, or areas where digging or landscaping has exposed the earth.

If your soil contains lead, you can protect your family with these tips:

- ◆ Eliminate all bare soil areas in yard by planting grass, installing ground cover or shrubs, or using mulch or stone
- ◆ Maintain healthy grass or other vegetation in your yard. Use turf-building fertilizer and water as needed
- ◆ Pay attention to drip lines and downspouts as these areas are especially prone to bare spots
- ◆ Use door mats to prevent tracking in contaminated soil or take shoes off outside
- ◆ Keep children and pets away from bare soil



Children's play areas can be a source of lead exposure. Make sure all areas of bare soil are covered by protective fabric and fresh, clean soil and/or mulch.



Tips for gardening

Lead is not easily absorbed by fruits and vegetables because of its tendency to remain bound in the soil. Follow these tips to minimize your exposure.

- ◆ Use raised beds with clean fresh soil from an outside source
- ◆ Locate gardens away from roads, driveways, and old painted structures
- ◆ Use mulch or ground cover to control dust
- ◆ Keep soil pH 6.5-7.0 to help prevent lead absorption
- ◆ Wash fruits & vegetables well, peel root crops, and discard the older, outer leaves of leafy vegetables to reduce contamination from soil particles
- ◆ Remove gardening shoes prior to entering your home
- ◆ Wash hands thoroughly after gardening

Other tips to prevent lead poisoning

TIPS: If you have young children

- ◆ Lead testing for children is required in New York State at the age of 1 & 2. Make sure you know your child's blood lead level
- ◆ Keep children away from any chipping, peeling or flaking paint
- ◆ Wash hands often, especially before eating and after playing outside
- ◆ Wash bottles, pacifiers, and toys frequently
- ◆ Serve healthy meals and snacks high in iron, calcium, and vitamin c, which helps to keep the body absorbing lead
- ◆ Always use cold water for cooking and drinking, and run the tap for 1-2 minutes before use. Have your water tested if you suspect lead

TIPS: If you live in an older home build before 1978 you should assume that lead paint exists.

- ◆ When doing renovating or painting yourself, use lead safe work practices. Free classes on how to work lead safe are available through the ECDOH
- ◆ When hiring a contractor make sure they have RRP certification by EPA / HUD

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Erie County Department of Health
(716) 961-6800
www.erie.gov/health/lead

NYS Department of Health
1-800-458-1158
www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead

Environmental Protection Agency
1-800-424-LEAD
www.epa.gov/lead

Cornell Waste Management Institute
607-255-1187
<http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu>

Disclaimer: The Erie County Department of Health does not provide medical advice. The information provided herein is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with questions you may have regarding a medical condition or issue.

