

Empowering your family for a healthy, toxic-free future

Learn how to find and test for lead and other common toxic chemicals in your home, and take simple steps to protect your family.

Recommended Actions

HERE ARE ACTIONS WE RECOMMEND YOU TAKE IN YOUR HOME TO HELP PROTECT YOUR FAMILY FROM LEAD

**BLOOD LEAD
TESTS**

1. Ask your child's doctor to test their blood lead level

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ME?

Any child can have high blood lead levels. You have to test to know.

DETAILS

Lead gets into the body from water, soil, indoor dust, and other sources. Children are especially vulnerable, since lead can harm the developing brain, and often builds up in children's bodies in greater amounts than in adults.

Blood lead tests for children help doctors and parents find children who have too much lead in their blood. Parents can then take action to get rid of lead sources in their child's home and environment.

When you use Vida to test your home, Serious and Significant test results show a more urgent need for blood lead tests. But even lower amounts of lead can be harmful.

You can always use Vida's tests and action steps to help reduce your family's lead exposures. The earlier in a child's life you use Vida, the better, including before your pregnancy.

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A blood lead test is usually recommended for children at ages 1 and 2. It is especially important for children in these higher risk groups:

- Living in a home built before 1960 that has recently been renovated, repaired, or painted, or that has been poorly maintained
- Living in a home or building where siblings or other children have had elevated blood lead levels
- Arriving to the U.S. as immigrants, refugees, or through international adoption

Even children who seem healthy may have dangerous levels of lead in their bodies. Some states require all children to be tested. Medicaid covers blood lead tests for children.

2. Don't paint or renovate an older home when you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy

LEAD PAINT HOME REPAIRS AND RENOVATIONS

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ME?

In an older home (pre-1978), lead paint is a risk.

DETAILS

Home repairs like sanding or scraping paint can make dangerous lead dust in homes built before 1978. Pregnant women and children should not be in the house while someone is renovating, remodeling, or painting a room with lead paint, or cleaning up afterwards.

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Lead can remain at high levels in house dust for months following an interior home project that disturbs lead paint. Blood lead levels are 12 percent higher in children living in a home renovated in the past 6 months.

It's best to have any needed renovations done well before pregnancy. Anyone planning a pregnancy should avoid doing the work.

Ask to see your contractor's Lead-Safe certification. Be sure that anyone who works in your home properly contains, minimizes, and cleans up dust. Learn more at [EPA's Lead-Safe Certified Guide to Renovate Right](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/documents/renovaterightbrochure.pdf) (<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/documents/renovaterightbrochure.pdf>) and [Do-It-Yourself guide](https://www.epa.gov/lead/renovation-repair-and-painting-program-do-it-yourselfers) (<https://www.epa.gov/lead/renovation-repair-and-painting-program-do-it-yourselfers>).

3. Protect your family from lead before, during, and after repairing any chipped, peeling lead paint

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ME?

Older homes (pre-1978) may need lead paint repairs. Here's how to keep your family safe.

DETAILS

Lead can build up in the bodies of children and adults in toxic amounts if repairs and renovations aren't done carefully. To protect your family, follow Vida's steps below. You can take action before, during, and after any work is done in your home.

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Before repairs are made:

- Always pick up any paint chips you see with a wet paper towel and throw them away.
- Use contact paper or duct tape to cover chipping or peeling paint in areas where children won't be tempted to peel it off.
- Don't let children chew on any painted surfaces.
- Follow Vida's steps for cleaning and getting the dust out of your house.

When you repair peeling and chipping paint:

- Make sure that a lead-safe certified contractor does the work.
- If you choose to do the work yourself, follow all of Vida's steps for lead paint repairs and renovations.
- Don't do the work yourself if you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy.
- Pregnant women and young children should stay out of the house until all work and all cleanup is done.

- And if you are planning a pregnancy, it's best to have any work done at least six months before you become pregnant, since lead dust can linger in the house for many months after repairs and renovations.

After repairs are made:

- Keep painted surfaces in good condition.
- Keep play areas, windowsills, and floors clean and dust-free. Follow Vida's steps for cleaning and getting the dust out of your house.
- Don't let children chew on painted surfaces.
- Remove your shoes when you come inside, so you don't track in lead from the soil.

4. Test your water for lead

WATER

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ME?

One of every six homes has more lead in water than is safe for young children

DETAILS

You can get a water test kit from Vida that tests for lead at 3 locations in your pipes. Both old and new homes can have lead in their water. It leaches from fixtures, pipes, and solder, and is found in the water of 80 percent of homes tested by Vida. There are simple solutions to reduce lead in your water, like flushing your pipes and using a filter. Testing is the only way to know if you have a lead problem.

Note: Did you already test but return only 1 or 2 bottles? Your list of Recommended Actions in this online report will tell you if you need a filter. But please test again and return all 3 samples. This lets Vida give you a complete picture of personalized, low- or no-cost solutions for lead in your home's water.

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It's especially important to test your water for lead when:

- You are planning a pregnancy or are newly pregnant.
- You plan to begin using water to make infant formula.
- There is road or pipe work on your block, or if you make changes to your plumbing. This can dislodge lead from pipes and valves.
- Your utility has changed its water source or treatment process. Read your water bill inserts and yearly water quality report to learn when this happens.
- During summer. Warmer water can pull more lead from pipes.

5. Clean your home every week to get rid of dust and lead pollution

DIRT DUST AND CLEAN HOMES

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ME?

House dust is a common source of lead for children

DETAILS

Dust is a source of lead for children – it sticks to their skin and hands, and gets into their mouths. A deep weekly cleaning will help. Follow Vida’s cleaning steps. Read more for a quick summary.

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- Pick up paint chips with a wet paper towel, wet mop your floors, dust with a microfiber or damp cloth, and vacuum with a HEPA vacuum cleaner if possible. Especially clean any floor hot spots you found, where your dust tests show the highest lead tests. Get the full list of Vida’s cleaning tips by choosing “View all actions by category” on this page.
- For pre-1978 homes: Don’t disturb areas with chipping and peeling paint. Follow any steps below on lead paint repairs and renovations, to keep any lead-paint flakes and dust out of your home.
- Check out any soils tests you’ve done – if any are Significant or Serious, it’s especially important not to track soil into your home.

Consider retesting your floor dust and vacuum cleaner dust after your home has been cleaned for several weeks using Vida's cleaning steps.

6. Use 3 essential tools to get rid of house dust

DIRT DUST AND CLEAN HOMES

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ME?

Your lead dust tests are fairly low, or only high in the "hot spots" you tested. But risks from lead add up for children, and no amount is safe. Here's what to do about it.

DETAILS

House dust sticks to hands and toys and contains over 100 toxic chemicals, including lead, arsenic and toxic flame retardants. Three essential dust-busting tools are microfiber dust cloths (or a damp cloth), a HEPA vacuum cleaner, and a high-quality door mat.

Your tests show fairly low lead levels in your dust or vacuum cleaner dirt, or high lead only in the "hot spots" you tested. But for any amount of lead in the home, cleaning up dust is important. Lead is just one of many pollutants commonly found in house dust.

MORE

Infants and young children swallow lead and other dust-bound pollutants when they put hands and objects in their mouths. Their dust exposures are 20 times higher than an adult's, pound for pound.

7. Take your shoes off at the door

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ME?

Every time you walk in from outside, you track a little bit of soil lead pollution into your home.

DETAILS

Families that leave shoes at the door cut down on dirt-bound lead, pesticides, and other pollutants inside the home.

MORE

Shoes pick up outdoor residues of lead, pesticides, and vehicle exhaust particles that can stick to carpets and floors – and babies' skin. One study found pollution levels 46 percent lower on floors where families take shoes off at the door.

8. Wash children's bottles, pacifiers, and toys often

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ME?

Cleaning things that go in your child's mouth is a must, especially if your Vida dust tests show high lead.

DETAILS

Lead builds up in house dust, which sticks to children's toys, bottles and pacifiers.

MORE

Both indoor and outdoor toys should be washed often to remove lead residues in dust and dirt.

9. Keep homes and cars smoke-free

**DIRT DUST
AND CLEAN
HOMES**

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ME?

Did you know that cigarette smoke leaves a film of lead in your house and in the air?

DETAILS

Places where people smoke have higher levels of chemicals that harm brain development, including lead. Children who spend time in those areas have higher blood lead levels.

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Breathing in someone else's smoke (second-hand smoke) is toxic. But third-hand smoke is also toxic. It's the long-lasting film of cigarette smoke that builds up on floors, carpets and clothing. It sticks to children's skin and hands, and can end up in their mouths.

Smoking is still allowed in one of every five households in the U.S. Keeping your home and car smoke-free is the best way to protect you and your family from these exposures.

10. Wash your baby's hands

**DIRT DUST
AND CLEAN
HOMES**

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ME?

It's surprising how much lead children can swallow, just from dust and dirt stuck to their hands.

DETAILS

Infants and toddlers put their hands in their mouths 22 times every hour, on average. They swallow lead that's in the dust and dirt stuck to their hands. Wash their hands often, but especially before eating, naps, and bedtimes.

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For washing hands, use a gentle soap free of fragrance. Read the ingredient label to be sure that fragrance is not listed. Avoid using diaper wipes to clean hands – they are often soaked in chemicals not meant for hands, food, and mouths.

For babies too young to hold their heads up, experts recommend washing hands with 3 disposable towels, one with mild soap, one for rinsing, and one for drying. Older infants and toddlers can wash their hands at a basin, with your help holding them up and washing as needed.

11. Keep the paint on your cabinets in good repair

FOOD

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ME?

You let Vida know that you have older, painted kitchen cabinets.

DETAILS

You let Vida know that your cabinets may have been painted before 1978, when lead paint was legal. There may be layers of lead paint on your cabinets. Keep it covered with new paint. And keep the paint in good repair, with no chipping or peeling, to protect your family from any lead paint underneath.

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You can also test the cabinet surface with a Vida wipe test to check for lead.

12. Don't serve food from dishware and containers that could contain lead

FOOD

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ME?

Do you use old or imported dishware?

DETAILS

Imported and antique dishware and food containers can have high levels of lead.

If you tested your dishware and Vida's results are very low or not detected, your imported or antique dish is okay to use occasionally. But don't serve or store acidic foods in it, such as tomato sauce or foods with vinegar. And don't use it if the glaze begins to show cracks or other signs of wear.

Any items you haven't tested are a concern. Don't use untested imported and antique items for food.

Choose dishware labeled "lead-free" and made after 1993, when strict limits for lead in dishware went into effect. See "more" for the highest risk types.

MORE

Dishware likely to have high lead includes:

- Terra cotta pottery from Latin America. Rustic items with transparent glaze are most likely to have high lead.
- Imported bean pots.
- Bright colored decorations on the surface that food touches.
- Glazed dishware with decorations that are rough or raised.
- Highly decorated Asian dishware.
- Glaze that is corroded.
- Dishware that has a dusty or chalky residue after washing.
- Antique dishware or dishware made before 1970.
- Crystal glassware. Occasional use is okay, but leaded crystal glassware should not be used by children or pregnant women. Also, food or liquids should never be stored in lead crystal.

Healthy Babies Bright Futures (HBBF) is an alliance of scientists, nonprofit organizations and donors working to create and support initiatives that measurably reduce exposures to neurotoxic chemicals in the first thousand days of development.

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