



Eco-Healthy Child Care

Eco-Healthy Child Care is a national program created by the Oregon Environmental Council to ensure that child care settings are as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxins.



Lead

What Is Lead and How Is It Used?

Lead is a naturally occurring heavy metal found in the environment. It is currently used in the production of certain batteries, metal and PVC piping, art supplies, ceramics and other common and industrial things. Due to health concerns, lead has been significantly reduced in paint, ceramic products, caulking, and pipe solder. The federal government banned lead-based paint from housing in 1978. Lead was also banned as a gasoline additive in the U.S. in 1978. Despite these bans, lead can still be found in a number of products including play jewelry, art supplies, PVC toys, paint, ceramic pottery, and piping.

Health Concerns Associated with Lead Exposure

Lead is a neurotoxin; it accumulates in blood, bones, muscles, and fat. Children exposed to lead can experience headaches, hearing problems, delayed growth, behavioral and learning problems, and damage to the brain and nervous system. Adult exposure can lead to reproductive problems, muscle and joint pain, decreased reaction time, affected memory, and nerve disorders. The people most at risk to exposures are pregnant women and young children.

Lead Is Especially Harmful to Children

- Children's growing bodies absorb more lead.
- Their brains and nervous systems are still developing, so they are more sensitive to the damaging effects of lead.
- Young children often put their hands and other objects in their mouths – these objects can have lead dust on them.

Reducing Exposure to Lead

- Children are exposed to lead by eating old paint chips (from 1978 or before) or inhaling old paint particles/dust.
 - ◊ *Maintain paint to prevent flaking or peeling by washing all areas around doors and windows. Paint over old flaking paint with low-VOC paint.*
- Many older homes have water pipes made with lead solder.
 - ◊ *Cold water is much less likely to leach lead from the pipes. Run cold water for 15-30 seconds before using for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula.*

- Imported, old, or handmade pottery often contains lead.
 - ◊ *Avoid these types of pottery when eating, drinking and cooking.*
- Soil is often contaminated with lead (exhaust from lead-contaminated gasoline settling on the ground before 1978).
 - ◊ *Use a rough mat for wiping feet or go shoe-free inside.*
- Costume jewelry and jewelry sold in vending machines often contain lead.
 - ◊ *Keep metal jewelry away from children.*
- Many children's vinyl products contain high levels of lead.
 - ◊ *Avoid children's vinyl products. Test vinyl products for lead with your own lead testing kit, found at most local hardware stores. Or, send in your product to the [Center for Environmental Health](#) for testing.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call: 503-222-1963 x119
Email: hesterd@oeconline.org
Visit: www.oeconline.org/ehcc

Lead Resources on the Internet

- Oregon Health and Sciences University, Lead Poisoning:
www.ohsu.edu/health/health-topics/topic.cfm?id=9131
- California Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch:
www.dhs.ca.gov/childlead
- Environmental Protection Agency:
www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/leadinfo.htm#health
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR):
www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts13.html#bookmark02
- Healthy Toys:
www.healthytoys.org
- Center for Environmental Health:
www.ceh.org