

Though lead-based paint (LBP) can be a health risk for teenagers and adults, it is more of a threat for children under six and pregnant women. Children can ingest a dangerous dose from a single paint chip and from lead dust that gets onto their toys and playthings.

After the mid-1940s, lead was used as a pigment in many paints – as much as 50% per weight. In 1976 the Canadian government limited the amount of lead to 0.5% per weight. If your house was built before 1980, the interior and exterior paint may contain small amounts of lead. A house painted before 1950 the paint will certainly contain significant levels of lead.

In the U.S., Congress passed the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 (referred to as Title X). This regulation requires the disclosure of the presence of lead for any house built before 1978. The following requirements have been established by HUD and EPA:

- **SELLERS/LESSORS MUST DISCLOSE THE PRESENCE OF LBP FOR ANY HOUSE BUILT PRIOR TO 1978**
- **SELLERS/LESSORS MUST PROVIDE AVAILABLE RECORDS/REPORTS PERTAINING TO THE PRESENCE OF LBP**
- **SELLERS/LESSORS MUST PROVIDE FEDERALLY APPROVED LEAD HAZARD INFORMATION PAMPHLET**
- **SALES/LEASING CONTRACTS MUST INCLUDE DISCLOSURE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT LANGUAGE**
- **PURCHASER IS ALLOWED UP TO 10 DAYS TO CONDUCT A RISK ASSESSMENT OR LEAD INSPECTION**
- **SELLERS/LESSORS AND REAL ESTATE AGENTS SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENSURING COMPLIANCE**

Given its durability, LBP was primarily used on surfaces that take punishment such as kitchen cabinets, door and window trims. Exterior siding and porch floors are not dangerous if they are in good condition. If the paint is crumbling, peeling or flaking then a potentially harmful situation exists. Renovating and remodeling can produce large amounts of lead-containing dust. Dust is also produced from the friction from opening and closing windows and doors.

A good test kit should be sensitive enough to indicate as little as 0.05% of lead in the paint. (In the U.S., the legal limit for lead in paint is **0.06%**). A complete lead analysis involves an X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analyzer that produces instant results on site. Another alternative is to send paint or dust samples from floors and window sills to a lab. A *Certificate of Lead-Based Paint Safe Housing* should be issued by the professional if the house is lead free or if the LBP poses a minimal health risk.

CONTROLLING THE HAZARD:

Most often the best way to deal with LBP is to leave it alone. If paint chips are accessible to children, such as on window ledges, then it should be remedied:

CLEANING UP – If there is lead dust, it is not hazardous to your children if it is cleaned up before they ingest it. Floors, window sills and window troughs should be scrubbed with water and detergent. Rinse out the mop or rag in a separate bucket and change the rinse water frequently.

ENCAPSULATION – Cover the old paint so that it is no longer exposed. If the surface is in good condition then another coat of lead-free paint may be all that is required. If the wall is deteriorating then you may want to cover the lead-based paint with wallpaper, paneling or drywall. Though not a permanent solution this method is the safest, easiest and least expensive remedy.

REPLACEMENT – In addition to encapsulating the walls, remove and replace doors, windows, baseboards and other trim with lead-free ones. Use proper preparation and care so as not to disturb the paint when removing these items.

REMOVAL – Mechanical removal or stripping of paint is the most dangerous method to deal with lead-based paint. This should be done by licensed contractors who adhere to strict safety precautions.

For further information contact your local public health department or environmental agency. In the US contact your local EPA/HUD office, National Lead Information Clearinghouse or Consumer Product Safety Commission. In Canada contact Standards Council of

