

LEAD POISONING PREVENTION

POLICY: Our center will make every effort to protect children from lead exposure.

PURPOSE: To protect the health of children because:

- The presence of lead hazards on a property with children under 6 years old is a violation of the San Francisco Health Code. Remediation will be mandatory by state law and a licensing citation may be issued.
- Lead poisoning has no early symptoms in children. Lead poisoning can cause permanent brain damage including developmental delays, learning problems, intellectual disability, aggression, and anti-social behavior problems, hearing loss, organ damage, dental cavities, and more. Even low levels of lead can cause lasting neurological harm.
- "Exposure to lead in the preschool years significantly increases the chance that children will be suspended or incarcerated during their school careers....Among boys, a one-unit increase in blood lead levels raised the probability of incarceration by 27 to 74 percent" Source and Article:
<https://spia.princeton.edu/news/decrease-lead-exposure-early-childhood-may-be-responsible-drop-crime-rate>
- Children under 6 years old and unborn babies are at the greatest risk of serious lead poisoning due to low levels of lead exposure compared to older children or adults. Children ages 0-6 and pregnant people should avoid any potential lead exposure.
- It is a licensing requirement to post the Risks and Effects of Lead Poisoning brochure (PUB 515 - available in section N) at your center.

PROCEDURE:

Children are exposed to lead through eating the lead because they put lead-contaminated hands, or food, or other objects into their mouths. The center should eliminate potential sources of lead in the childcare environment. Common sources of lead and prevention strategies include:

1. Water

- a. See section G-8 on testing drinking water for lead.

- b. For older plumbing: Flush the tap for 30 seconds to 2 minutes before using the water for drinking or cooking. Water in pipes and faucets may become contaminated with lead from brass faucets or lead solder when water has not been taken from the tap for more than 6 hours.
- c. Use only cold tap water to drink, cook food, or prepare baby formula. If you need hot water, take it from the cold water tap and heat it.
- d. Many water filters do not take lead out. If you buy a water filter, be sure that it says that it removes lead.
- e. Do not store drinking water in a clay pottery pitcher.

2. Chipping paint or any remodeling work done on buildings built before 1979

- a. Any amount of chipping paint should be immediately blocked off from access to children and remediated as soon as possible.
- b. Before starting any repair, remodeling, or construction projects that could disrupt the paint on the walls, seek detailed guidance from the SFPDH Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (415-252-3800) on how to minimize the spread of lead during the construction.
 - i. If renovation and repair work on a pre-1979 building is not properly contained and all dust and debris subsequently cleaned up, it is considered a violation of the San Francisco Building Code.
- c. Some younger children will mouth/bite on windowsills within reach, especially while teething. Do not allow biting/mouthing/teething on painted windowsills.

3. Soil and dirt

- a. Before gasoline fuel was "unleaded" in 1995, cars driving around the city released lead in the air which has settled into the soil around us. Lead in soil does **not** go away over time. Some areas of soil have much higher lead levels than other areas, but all soil and dirt should be treated as potentially containing lead. You can reduce exposure risk by:
 - b. Removing outdoor shoes inside the center or home.
 - c. Washing hands well after playing in dirt or gardening.
 - d. Regularly washing of floors with water.

- e. Using new soil to grow food in a garden.
- f. Covering bare or uncovered dirt/soil in your yard.

4. Ceramic glaze on pottery

- a. Do not serve water or food stored in clay pottery and do not cook food in clay pottery unless a lead test has been done on the pottery. Especially if the pottery was made outside of the U.S.

5. Metals in jewelry, keys, toys, etc.

- a. Be aware that lead is often found in metals and some plastics. Avoid metal objects or test each potential object that children regularly play with or put in their mouth using a home test kit.
- b. If families have placed metal jewelry, cultural amulets, etc on their children, speak to the parents about testing the item for lead as well as risks of jewelry being a choking hazard.

6. Plastic coating on cables and cords

- a. Keep all electric cables and cord out of reach of children, especially young children prone to mouthing/chewing on cords.

7. Toys and art supplies

- a. Lead is found in plastic parts or metal parts of toys, some children's products like baby bottles, sunglasses, and every day items, especially if the item was manufactured outside of the U.S. It can be impossible to predict that some common toys or items have high lead levels! It is recommended to sign up for email updates on recalled items by the Consumer Product Safety Commission to find out if lead has been found in commonly sold children's products. Link to sign up for email alerts on recalls: [Recalls | CPSC.gov](#)
- b. You can also try to avoid purchasing toys and products manufactured outside of the U.S. because many other countries do not enforce or even require safety testing of manufactured items for lead levels.

8. Dust

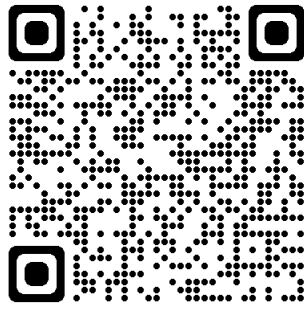
- a. Dust can sometimes contain lead, therefore, clean floors and surfaces regularly and wipe down dusty surfaces with a wet disposable cloth.

9. Make up

- a. Some traditional or cultural make up products like Surma, Kohl, Kajal, etc. can have high levels of lead. If a parent is using eye liner or similar product

on their child for cultural reasons, talk to the parent about testing the make up for lead. The use of eye liner on infants and children is sometimes practiced by some families from India or Pakistan, in both Muslim and Hindu cultures.

10. **Occupational exposure** to facilities working with metals like fishing weights, bullets, recycling facilities, construction, and remodeling work, etc.
 - a. Adults exposed to lead at work can transfer lead particles from their clothing or shoes to children. Workers should change their clothes and bathe before coming into contact with children.
11. Some **candy** manufactured in other countries (e.g. Miguelito chili powder and Rockaleta Junior lollipops from Mexico).
12. Some **traditional spices and herbal remedies** that are imported from outside of the U.S (e.g. Arazcon and others).
13. Children who are **deficient in vitamins/nutrients** will absorb higher levels of lead from lead exposure compared to children with healthy nutrition. Eating enough Vitamin C, calcium, and iron reduces the risk of lead poisoning.
14. Children with Medi-Cal or publicly funded programs are required to have their blood levels tested by their healthcare provider at age 1 and at age 2. Children with private insurance or who are not receiving subsidized services may not always be offered a lead test. Parents may ask their healthcare provider for a lead test at any time, and **every child should have at least 1 lead test before age 6.**
15. For any questions regarding lead poisoning, and lead related resources, please contact the SFDPH Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 415-252-3800 or visit [SFDPH - Lead Prevention Info for Child Care Providers](#)
16. For Home Lead Hazard Investigation, please **call 311** to reach out to SFDPH Childhood Lead Prevention Program. Scan QR code below to access their program website:



San Francisco Department of Public Health
Child Care Health Program
333 Valencia St. 3rd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103