

Boston Health Notes

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Awareness Can Prevent Lead Poisoning

By Laura Melbin, Health Education Coordinator, Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, Boston Public Health Commission

Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

For the second year in a row, Massachusetts' Lead Poisoning Prevention Week will be celebrated in Boston with a Children's Health and Housing Fair in Franklin Park. On July 22, 2000, from 10:00 AM-2:00 PM, families are invited to join the celebration with speakers, games, raffles, entertainment, free food, free lead screenings for children and information on preventing lead poisoning.

Lead Poisoning is Still a Danger

Even at low levels, lead poisoning can cause brain damage and other health problems. The best way to find out if your child has lead poisoning is to have a blood lead test. It is also a good idea to find out immediately if your home contains lead. Your child is at risk for lead poisoning if:

- Your home was built before 1978 (when lead house paint was completely banned)
- Your home is being renovated, which can create lead dust;
- Your home contains painted furniture or toys from before 1978;
- You eat fruits or vegetables from a garden in your yard (soil may have high levels of lead).

Find Out if You Have Lead!

The Boston Public Health Commission Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (LPPP) (617) 534-5966 provides free paint and soil lead inspections to any family who lives in Boston and has a child under six.

Tips to Prevent Lead Poisoning:

- Do not allow your children to eat or drink when playing outside. Make sure they wash their hands and toys well before eating.
- Feed your child foods rich in iron, calcium, and vitamin C, such as peanut butter, raisins, milk products, green vegetables, and oranges.
- Iron, calcium, and vitamin C make it harder for the body to absorb lead.
- Use only the cold water tap for drinking, cooking, or making baby formula. Run the water COLD for two or three minutes to completely flush out the pipes. Never use hot water straight from the tap, because hot water draws the lead out from the pipes.
- Twice a week, wet mop floors and wet wipe window sills and window wells with warm water, paper towels or a sponge, and a high-phosphate cleaner. Throw the sponge away after cleaning.
- Do not sand or scrape painted surfaces.
- Get soil tested in your yard.

Tenants' Rights, Landlords' Responsibilities

The Massachusetts Lead Law requires that every place a child under six lives must be made lead safe. Landlords are required to rent to families who are eligible tenants, and landlords must also pay for the cost of making the apartment safe. The LPPP can work with landlords to see if they are eligible for financial assistance to make apartments safe.

For more information

Please call the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (617) 534-5966. For more information about housing, call the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance at (617) 825-6530. If you have questions about your legal rights, call Greater Boston Legal Services at (617) 357-5757 x3998.

Lead Facts:

- About one-third of lead poisoned children were exposed to lead paint dust because of renovations, such as replacing a window or tearing down a wall.
- Property owners are required by law to remove lead from a home where a child under six lives. Landlords cannot refuse to rent to tenants, or evict them, because of lead paint or because there are children.
- The Lead Poisoning Prevention Program offers free lead inspections. Call (617) 534-5966.