

Preventing Childhood Lead Poisoning in Saco

According to the Maine Tracking Network, in Saco/Biddeford in 2015, 13 children under three years old tested positive for elevated blood lead levels. Lead dust is the most common way children are poisoned by lead in Maine. Lead paint, which was banned in 1978, is commonly found in homes built before 1950. In these homes, normal wear and tear or home renovations may produce lead dust. For this reason, children under the age of three living in old housing are at higher risk of being poisoned by lead. Lead dust can remain in homes for a long time, collecting in areas of the home where children put their hands and play with toys, like floors and windowsills. Children (especially those under age three) often put their hands and toys in their mouths, which makes it very easy for lead dust to get into and damage their growing bodies. When lead is absorbed into the body, it can cause learning disabilities, behavior problems, hearing damage, language or speech delays and lower intelligence.

With funding from the Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention, Coastal Healthy Communities Coalition (CHCC) is working with families, property owners and the cities of Saco and Biddeford to prevent childhood lead poisoning. By providing information and education to families and property owners, and supporting city leadership in advancing prevention efforts, CHCC's program aims to make our community healthier. So, what are some things you can do to prevent lead poisoning?

Families:

1. Assume your property has lead paint if it was built before 1950. Visit this [website](#) to request a **FREE** home lead dust test kit to determine if your home has lead dust hazards
2. Ask your child's doctor about a blood lead test.
3. Regularly clean floors, windowsills and tabletops with a wet mop or cloth.
4. Always wash children's hands after play and before meals, naps and bedtime.
5. Frequently wipe down toys, clean stuffed animals and wash bottles or pacifiers.
6. Routinely check painted windows, doors and floors for peeling or chipping paint.
7. Never dry scrape or sand chipping peeling or chipping paint. Learn how to renovate, repair and paint safely before beginning any home improvement projects.

Property Owners:

1. Maintain painted surfaces properly. Look for chipping, peeling, flaking or chalking paint every 6 months and at unit turnover.
2. In your lease, require that tenants tell you about peeling, chipping, flaking or chalking paint. Address these problems when notified.
3. If you need to renovate, repair or paint in your rental property, hire an RRP certified contractor or get certified yourself.
4. Keep a record of anything you do to address lead paint in your rental property.

Visit www.maine.gov/healthyhomes for information on testing, maintenance, looking for lead and RRP certified contractors.

To learn more, contact Sarah Breul, Director, Coastal Healthy Communities Coalition.
Phone: 207 602 3555 or email: sbreul@une.edu