

Beware of Lead Poisoning

Lead is a highly toxic metal that can be found in many products and materials in our homes and businesses. The primary source of lead in the human environment is lead-based paint, but lead can also be found in the dust and soil where lead-based paints have peeled off or have been disturbed, as well as in some types of plumbing materials. Although Congress passed laws prohibiting the manufacture and use of lead-based paint in 1978, many buildings and homes built before this ban still contain significant amounts of lead-based paint.

Lead poisoning occurs when lead is absorbed by the body, primarily through breathing or swallowing airborne lead dust or lead paint chips. Children are particularly susceptible because they play on the floor or ground, and they are constantly putting their fingers or various objects into their mouths. Although lead poisoning occurs gradually, after repeated exposure young children will absorb about 50% of the lead that they ingest. Adults, because of physiological differences, will absorb only about 10%. Obviously, children are at much greater risk from lead poisoning than are adults.

If left untreated, lead poisoning has serious effects on the human body, depending on the length and level of exposure. Low levels of lead poisoning can cause developmental, learning, and behavioral problems, which are especially troublesome for children. High levels of lead poisoning can cause brain damage, mental retardation, anemia, liver and kidney damage, and hearing loss. The most severe cases of lead poisoning can result in brain swelling, convulsions, coma, and even death.

If you are unsure or just need peace of mind, have your home checked for lead by a qualified inspector. When renovating older homes or attempting to remove lead-based paint, hire a trained, experienced contractor who will take necessary precautions and properly clean up the area. Keep children away from areas that you suspect may be contaminated by lead, keep dust down by cleaning with lead-specific products, and wash your hands frequently. Finally, if you suspect that a loved one has suffered a lead-related injury, please call us so we can help you determine your legal rights. Depending on your circumstances, you may have a case against a manufacturer, contractor, landlord, or seller, and you may be entitled to recover money for your injuries.

Symptoms of Lead Poisoning

Common symptoms of lead poisoning in children are decreased appetite, stomachaches, sleeplessness, learning problems, constipation, vomiting, diarrhea, tiredness, lowered IQ, and anemia.

Common symptoms of lead poisoning in adults are fatigue, depression, heart failure, abdominal pain, gout, kidney failure, high-blood pressure, wrist or foot weakness, reproductive problems, and anemia.

If you live or work in a home or building constructed prior to 1978 or if you feel you may have been exposed to lead, you should have a simple blood test performed by a medical doctor. If it turns out that you have been exposed to lead, the main treatment for lead poisoning is to stop the exposure, but there are also medications available that will lower the lead levels in the blood.