

# Look Out For Lead

**How can I find out if there is  
lead in my home?**

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions





# Be Aware!

## Know Your Building:

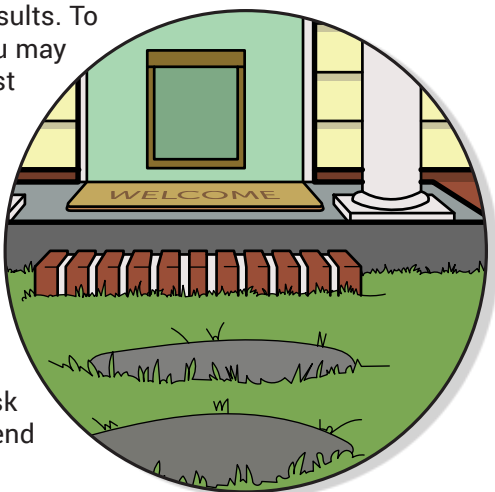
If your home was constructed before 1978, it may contain lead. The windows, doors, walls, porches and exterior siding of pre-1950 buildings are even more likely to contain lead-based paint. Flaking, peeling, chipping or chalking paint with lead in it can be a hazard, especially to young children. Paint is not the only place around the home where lead may be found – it may also be found in dust, soil, some improperly fired glazed ceramic ware (if the glaze contained lead) and some vinyl miniblinds.

### **Q: When does lead-based paint become a hazard?**

**A:** Intact lead-based paint is usually not a hazard. It may become a hazard when it peels, flakes, chips, chalks, or is disturbed through repairs, maintenance, or renovation activities. This is also true for varnished surfaces, if the varnish contains lead. Dust created through these activities is especially dangerous, because it is easily ingested, hides in many places, and is often sticky and difficult to clean.

### **Q: How can I find out if my home contains lead?**

**A:** If your home was built before 1978, especially before 1950, it might have lead-based paint on or in it. One way to test is to purchase a home test kit from a hardware or paint store. These kits are not always reliable and may be difficult to use or the instructions may be difficult to follow. Often these kits merely indicate the presence of lead but do not give detailed results. To get even better information, you may choose to send paint chips, dust or soil samples to a certified laboratory for analysis. In most cases, dust samples should be collected by a person trained to collect them. The best method to determine whether or not there are lead hazards in your home is to hire a certified lead risk assessor who will conduct a thorough risk assessment and then recommend a course of action.



**Q: How do I find a certified lead risk assessor, inspector, or contractor in my area?**

**A:** Look under “Lead” in the yellow pages or call the National Lead Information Center toll-free at (800)424-LEAD (5323) or go to the website [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead).

**Q: How do I know if my water is safe?**

**A:** Homes built before 1986 may have lead solder on the water pipes. Some places still have lead service lines that bring water into the home. Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your health. You can flush your water to reduce potential exposure to lead from household lead plumbing. This is especially important when the water has been off and sitting in the pipes for more than 6 hours. Before drinking, flush your home’s pipes by running the tap, taking a shower, doing laundry, or doing a load of dishes. Drink or cook only with water that comes out of the tap cold. Water that comes out of the tap warm or hot can have higher levels of lead. Boiling this water will not reduce the amount of lead in your water.



SC’s Lead Testing in Schools and Child Care Programs grant provides free water lead testing to schools and child care programs across the state. Participation in this program is voluntary. This grant allows DHEC to test water from a school’s or child care provider’s faucets for lead at no cost to the facility. For more information or to get your questions answered please contact Debra Boston, WIIN Grant Project Manager, at Desk: 803-898-4214 or Cell: 803-806-9085 or [bostond@dhec.sc.gov](mailto:bostond@dhec.sc.gov).

**Q: How does remodeling cause a lead-based paint hazard in my home?**

**A:** When lead-based painted (LBP) surfaces are disturbed during remodeling, lead contaminated dust is created. The lead in this dust is a poison and if it is breathed or ingested, it may go into the blood stream.

- Keep all children and pregnant women away from the work area.
- Keep all food, drinks and tobacco products out of the work area and do not smoke, eat, or drink with dirty (LBP dust-contaminated) hands.

- Use an appropriate and properly fitting air-purifying respirator when stirring up the LBP dust.
- Always use a plastic drop cloth and use plastic sheeting to protect floors and furniture from being contaminated with the dust.
- Dispose of all waste in heavy-duty plastic bags.
- Careful daily cleanup of the work area and equipment will help prevent leaded dust accumulations.

### **Q: Is it ok to hire anyone to remodel or renovate my home?**

**A:** Renovations, repair jobs and paint jobs in pre-1978 homes and buildings can create significant amounts of lead-based paint dust. If your contractor will disturb lead-based paint while renovating, repairing or painting your home, he or she must be trained in lead-safe work practices. He or she should show you proof of their training before they begin any projects at your house. For more information, go to [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead) or [www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/healthy\\_homes/training/rrp/rrp](http://www.hud.gov/program_offices/healthy_homes/training/rrp/rrp).

### **Q: What are some safe work practices when working on painted surfaces?**

- A:** Try not to stir up dust or fumes any more than necessary. Be sure to:
- Work Wet! - Wet sand and/or wet scrape
  - Mist areas prior to drilling holes
  - Never set a heat gun above 1100 degrees Fahrenheit and use a flameless heat gun
  - Keep children and pregnant women out of the work area
  - Be careful not to track dust and dirt from the work areas into clean parts of the house
  - Questions about disposal of wastes painted with lead-based paint may be directed to the Bureau of Land and Waste Management at (803) 898-2000

### **Q: Are there things that I should never do when working on a pre-1978 home where lead is suspected?**

- A:** YES!
- Don't powerwash.
  - Don't use on-site chemical stripping.
  - Don't use a heat gun above 1100 degrees Fahrenheit.
  - Don't dry sand or dry scrape the paint.

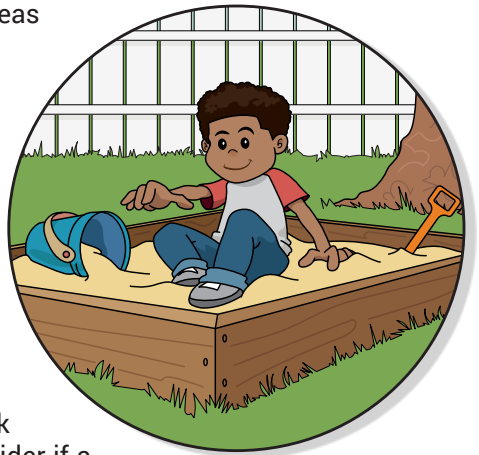
**Q: Where can I find more information about lead-based paint?**

**A:** Visit the Environmental Protection Agency’s website at [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead).

**Q: What are the greatest lead hazards and how can I protect my family and myself?**

**A:** Lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust and soil (from deteriorated lead-based paint and from leaded gasoline use), as well as some vinyl miniblinds are some of the most common lead hazards. Protection from these hazards include:

- Washing children’s hands often, especially before napping and after playing and before eating.
- Wet dust, wet mop floors and vacuum carpets often to control lead dust. Remember: “Damp reduces dust.”
- Use doormats to help keep dust and dirt out of the house.
- Clean windows inside and out. Wash dust and loose paint chips from window wells and woodwork. Use paper towels, warm water and household detergent. Rinse well. Discard paper towels.
- Use only lead-safe miniblinds. When you purchase miniblinds, look on the box for words like “Lead safe,” “No lead added,” or “No lead additives used”. Do not let children chew on, play with, or play around miniblinds and be sure to wash their hands if they handle the blinds.
- Have children play in grassy areas away from the drip line of the house. If children play on a porch, inspect children’s activity areas often for changes in condition of paint or varnish.
- Store food and beverages safely – not in glazed pottery or opened cans.
- If you have a child under the age of 6 and you live in a residence built before 1978, ask your doctor or health care provider if a blood lead test is right for your child.



The information provided in this pamphlet was deemed correct at the time of printing. This pamphlet is not meant to provide an exhaustive list of possible sources of lead in the home. If you have questions or want more information, call DHEC's South Carolina Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at

**(866) 466-5323**  
**(866-4NO-LEAD).**

WIIN Grant Program:

[scdhec.gov/bow/lead-testing-schools-child-care-programs](https://scdhec.gov/bow/lead-testing-schools-child-care-programs)

Debra Boston,  
WIIN Grant Project Manager, at  
Desk: 803-898-4214 or  
Cell: 803-806-9085 or  
[bostond@dhec.sc.gov](mailto:bostond@dhec.sc.gov).

# South Carolina... Lead-Safe for Life.

[www.scdhec.gov/childhoodlead](http://www.scdhec.gov/childhoodlead)



*Brought to you by the  
South Carolina Department of Health  
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