

## **LEAD AND LEAD POISONING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **1. What Is Lead?**

- a. Lead is a highly poisonous metal, present naturally in the environment, which was used for many years in products found in and around our homes.

### **2. Where Is Lead Typically Found In Housing?**

- a. Paint - Many homes built before 1978 have paint with lead in it. Lead made colors intense and helped paint stay on walls longer. The federal government banned lead-based paint from housing in 1978. Lead can be found:
  - i. In homes in the city, country, or suburbs.
  - ii. In apartments, single-family homes, and both private and public housing.
  - iii. Inside and outside of the house.
- b. Soil - In soil around a home. Soil can pick up lead from exterior paint, or other sources such as past use of leaded gas in cars.
- c. Dust - In household dust. Dust can pick up lead from deteriorating lead-based paint or from soil tracked into a home.
- d. Water - In drinking water. Your home might have plumbing that contains lead. Call your local health department or water supplier to find out about testing your water for lead. You cannot see, smell, or taste lead, and boiling your water will not get rid of lead.

### **3. Where Else Is Lead Found?**

- a. On the job (ex. Home renovators, police who use weapons, battery manufacturers). If you work with lead, you could bring it home on your hands or clothes. Shower and change clothes *before* coming home. Launder your work clothes separately from the rest of your family's clothes.
- b. On old painted toys and furniture.
- c. In food and liquids stored in lead crystal or lead-glazed pottery or porcelain.
- d. In industries that release lead into the air such as battery manufacturers.
- e. Hobbies that use lead, such as making pottery or stained glass, or refinishing furniture.
- f. In folk remedies that contain lead, such as "farouk" (Middle Eastern remedy for teething), "pay-loo-ah" (fever and rash treatment in Southeast Asia) and "azarcon." (Mexican treatment for intestinal blockage).
- g. Imported Candies/Food.

### **4. Who Is At Risk?**

- a. Every child is at risk, especially in New Jersey with its old housing stock and industrial heritage. Therefore, New Jersey law mandates that every child be blood lead tested before age 6.
- b. Children, especially under the age of 6 years, because they are growing so rapidly and because they tend to put their hands or other objects into their mouths.

## **5. Can Lead Poisoning Be Prevented?**

- a. Lead poisoning is entirely preventable. The key is stopping children from coming into contact with lead. This is how you can help protect your children from lead poisoning:
  - i. Damp-mop floors and damp-wipe surfaces often; and frequently wash a child's hands, pacifiers, and toys to reduce exposure to lead.
  - ii. Use only cold water from the tap for drinking, cooking, and for making baby formula. Run water for 1 minute each time before drinking it, especially if you have not used your water for a few hours. Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead. Most of the lead in household water usually comes from the plumbing in your house, not from the local water supply.
  - iii. Avoid using home remedies for illness as well as cosmetics (for example kohl, alkohol) that contain lead.
  - iv. If your work or hobbies involves working with lead-based products take basic steps to decrease your exposure to lead (for example, by showering and changing clothes after finishing the task). If you plan to remodel a building built before 1978 it is best to hire a professional to do the work.
  - v. Don't let children chew on anything covered with lead paint.
  - vi. Eat healthy. Don't store food in pottery or cans as they may contain lead.

## **6. Is Lead Poisoning Reversible?**

- a. Medical treatment may reduce the amount of lead in a child's blood, but the damage already done is irreversible. That is why prevention is stressed.
- b. All New Jersey children, and especially those who are at risk of lead poisoning, need to be blood lead tested and, if necessary, treated.

**For more information 1) call your children's Doctor or 2) if uninsured, call 1-800-328-3838 to find your Local Health Department where you can request a free Blood Lead Test for all your children, including babies.**