

# Let's Be Lead Free

## A guide to nutrition and lead poisoning prevention

**What is lead poisoning?** Lead is a metal found in many things around us, including lead-based paint, dust, soil, water, and lead-glazed pottery. You can eat, drink, or breathe in lead. When too much lead gets into your body, it is called **lead poisoning**. Lead poisoning can cause learning, hearing, and behavioral problems, and can harm your child's brain, kidneys, and other organs. Lead is even harmful to unborn babies. These problems can be permanent. In some extreme cases, it can cause death. Talk with your health care provider or doctor to see if you or your child should be tested for lead.

### Prepare foods safely

- Wash your hands and your baby's or child's hands with soap before preparing and eating food.
- Wash spoons, forks, bottles, and pacifiers that have fallen to the floor or ground before using them again. Throw away any food that has fallen to the floor or ground.
- Use only **cold** water for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula. Before drinking water from the faucet, flush pipes by running your tap, taking a shower, or doing a load of laundry or dishes. This is important when the water has been off for more than 6 hours.
- When sterilizing water to mix with baby formula, put the cold water in a pan and cover with a lid. Bring the water to a bubbly boil for 1 minute. Do not boil for longer as this will increase the concentration of lead that may be in the water.
- Consider using a water filter certified to remove lead and know when it is time to replace the filter.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables with cold water. Scrub root vegetables, like carrots, potatoes, and beets, with a brush and cold water.
- Store food or drinks in glass or plastic containers. Do not use imported lead-glazed ceramic pottery to cook, serve, or store food. Do not use pewter or brass containers or utensils to cook, serve, or store food. Do not use leaded crystal to serve or store beverages. Do not use dishes that are chipped or cracked.

**Clay, soil, pottery, or paint chips should never be mouthed or eaten because they may be contaminated with lead.**

### Make healthy food choices

- Eat a variety of foods every day.
- Eat meals on time—don't skip meals. Eat healthy snacks between meals. Children with empty stomachs absorb more lead than children with food in their stomachs.
- Eat foods high in **iron, calcium, and vitamin C** every day. These healthy foods make it harder for your body to absorb lead. Calcium also helps make teeth and bones strong.

#### Good sources of iron:

- lean meat, liver, chicken, turkey, clams, shrimp, light tuna
- beans, peas, and lentils
- WIC cereals and other iron-fortified cereals
- potato with the skin

#### Good sources of vitamin C:

fruit juice, vegetable juice, broccoli, grapefruit, kiwi, mangos, melons, oranges, papaya, raw cabbage, strawberries, tomatoes

#### Best sources of calcium:

milk, cheese, yogurt, calcium-fortified soy milk, calcium-fortified orange juice

#### Fair sources of calcium:

canned salmon or sardines with bones, collards, mustard greens, turnip greens, kale, broccoli

- **Do not take calcium pills made from bone meal or dolomite. These pills may contain lead.**
- **Do not use imported medicines and herbal remedies (azarcon, Ayurvedics); cosmetics and ceremonial powders (tiro, kohl, kajal, surma); and personal care products (litargirio) that may contain lead.**
- **Use caution when eating candies, spices, food additives, and other foods that are made outside the United States, especially if they are noncommercial products of unknown safety.**



### Lead-based paint

Children can get lead poisoning from lead paint in homes built before 1978. When old paint cracks and peels, it makes lead dust. Lead dust is so small you cannot see it. Children get lead poisoning from swallowing dust that is on their hands and toys.

- Use wet paper towels to clean up lead dust.
- Clean around windows, play areas, and floors.
- Wash hands and toys often with soap and water.

It is important to find and fix lead in your home as soon as possible. Have your home inspected by a licensed lead inspector. Don't remodel or renovate until your home has been inspected for lead. Home repairs like sanding or scraping paint can make dangerous lead dust. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should stay away from repair, repainting, renovation, and remodeling work.

**To find out more about preventing lead poisoning, contact the statewide Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (850) 245-4401 or call your county health department.**

Florida Department of  
Health  
WIC Program  
FloridaWIC.org  
HealthiestWeightFL.com



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