



Fact Sheet: Lead hazard management in children's services



Lead in childcare centres

Operators and staff of early childhood education and care services facilities need to be aware of potential sources of lead on their premises, and be able to identify any dangers so that exposure to lead can be reduced.

Early childhood education and care services facilities need to consider the management of lead hazards because:

- young children can spend a large part of their day in care
- young children are at the greatest risk of exposure to lead
- you have a role in educating parents about health, children and identifying sources of lead.

If any of the following apply to you, take extra care. See 'Where to get advice' for more information.

- There is a possibility that your building may contain lead paint.
- Your service is on or near land used for industrial purposes.
- Your service is near a lead point source (e.g. smelter, mine).
- Your service has fill (soil) that could be contaminated with lead.
- There are lead-contaminated renovations or demolition sites nearby.

Lead and your health

Exposure to lead is linked with harmful effects on many organs and bodily functions. People of all ages may be harmed by lead but the risks are greatest for unborn babies, infants and children. Factors which influence the symptoms and health effects include the age and health status of the person, the amount of lead, and the duration of exposure.

It is well established that elevated blood lead levels can have harmful effects including anaemia, kidney problems and neurological or developmental effects, particularly in children.

If you suspect a child in your care has been exposed to lead, you can advise the parent or guardian to visit their doctor for further advice.

For more information regarding the health effects of lead please refer to the NHMRC Statement and Information Paper on the Health Effects of Lead at www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-topics/lead-blood-levels.

Potential sources of lead

Potential sources and pathways of lead exposure



Old lead paint

Paint containing lead was used in many Australian buildings prior to 1970, but those built more recently may also present a risk to your health. The amount of lead in paint has decreased significantly over the years – the older the paint the more likely it is to contain high levels of lead.

Year	Maximum limit of lead in paint
Before 1970	50%
1970–1992	1%
1992–1997	0.25%
1997–today	0.1%

Some industrial coatings and specialised paints used today contain lead. These products must be labelled if they contain more than 0.1% lead – so you need to read the label.

Lead-contaminated dust

Renovations or maintenance works can disturb existing lead-contaminated dust built up over many years in ceiling cavities, behind walls and between or under floorboards. Lead dust may build up over time through:

- industrial pollution
- historical leaded petrol fallout
- deterioration of old paint
- previous renovations or maintenance
- emissions and fumes from burning materials containing lead.

Unsafe renovation or maintenance practices such as sand blasting old lead paint creates a serious dust hazard. Ensure contractors hired to carry out renovations or maintenance follow safe work practices and that any dust generated is removed upon completion.

Lead-contaminated soil

Lead in soil may be hazardous because contamination is not always obvious.

If the exterior of your building is painted with lead paint, soils within 2 meters of the wall may be contaminated with lead. Soils underneath buildings or verandahs may also be contaminated.

Other potential sources include nearby renovations, industries, historical lead fallout on busy main roads and gutters, and contaminated fill used in the garden.

Contaminated soil can be ingested by children, or transported into buildings on shoes, clothes or toys.

How to keep your premises lead-safe



Prevention strategies

Strategies to prevent lead exposure involve removing the lead hazard from the environment and reducing exposure through a number of prevention measures. Improved hygiene can significantly reduce a child's exposure to lead.

- Children should wash their hands and faces before eating or having a nap – dry well, as wet hands and feet attract dirt and dust.
- Wash fruit and vegetables before eating.
- Encourage children to throw away food that falls on the floor.
- Keep indoor toys inside and outdoor toys outside.
- Wash children's toys (especially those used outside) and dummies frequently.

Eliminating consumer products containing lead

Directors/managers and staff should be aware of the possible lead exposure hazards in consumer products, such as toys or equipment that contain lead or leaded paint, and should prevent children's contact with these.

Where to get advice

For information on lead and the environment call the NSW EPA's Environment Line on 131 555 or visit the NSW EPA lead safety webpage: www.epa.nsw.gov.au/lead.

For further information and advice about protecting yourself from lead, testing for lead and removal services and guidelines for safe home renovation call The LEAD Group on 1800 626 026 or (02) 9716 0014. Lead test kits are available from the Lead Group (www.leadworld.com/shop) and most hardware stores.

Ask your doctor for information about blood tests and the effects of lead on your health.

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Speak and listen users: phone 1300 555 727, then ask for 131 555

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. However, as appropriate, readers should obtain independent advice before making any decision based on this information.

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