



A S S I S T A N C E

## What You and Your Family Should Know About Lead

Find more easy-to-read legal information at [www.ptla.org](http://www.ptla.org)

### What can I do to help minimize the risk of lead poisoning in my home?

Think about where your child plays

- Pick up any paint chips and throw them out
- Do not let your child near a window sill with chipped paint
- Be careful of old porches with chipped paint

Think about how to keep lead dust out of your child's mouth

- Wash children's hands before they sleep or eat
- Wash children's toys

Clean up dust

- Wash window sills, trim, and other areas children touch
- Wash floors once a week

Test your home for lead levels

- Use lead swab kits to test window sills or other areas in your home that you think may be a source of lead. Purchase kits at a local hardware store for \$2.00-\$5.00, or ask at a local PTLA office.



- Get in touch with the **Maine State Lead Prevention Program 1-866-292-3474** before starting a home repair or before allowing a landlord to start a repair that may disturb lead paint. Someone from the program can talk with you about the best ways to keep your risk of lead exposure low.

### How do I find out if my child has lead poisoning?

- The most important thing you can do is **ASK** your child's medical provider to order the blood test used to check for lead poisoning.
- The result on that test will set in motion any legal protections your child and the rest of your family might have.
- Maine state law says that all children who receive MaineCare must be checked by a medical provider for lead exposure with a blood test at **12 months and 24 months**
- If a test shows high levels of lead in your child's blood, you should continue to test every 1-3 months until the level goes down.



- Screening is done at this time because this is when your child is most at risk for lead poisoning.
- This is a high-risk age because children at this age put everything they touch in their mouths. They are often attracted to window sills, a likely source of lead dust, and they spend a lot of time on the floor.
- Children who have not been checked for lead poisoning before should be tested at any time between ages 36-72 months (**3-6 years old**).

**Once I get my child tested, what do the test results mean?**

- Follow up with your medical provider to make sure you know what the test results were and what the number means.
- Any number at all means that your child has been exposed to lead. The best resource for you is the **Maine State Lead Prevention Program: 1-866-292-3474.** However, medical providers do not usually consider lead exposure a “problem” unless your child’s blood count is over 10.
- The Maine State Lead Prevention Program has a public health nurse and an environmental specialist who will talk with you about possible sources of lead in your home and what to do about it.



**What is my landlord legally obligated to do regarding my child’s lead exposure?**

1. Written Lead Disclosure

- For any apartment you rent that was built before 1978, the landlord must give you a written disclosure that lets you know that there might be lead in the home.
- If your landlord does not do this, and it turns out that your child has high lead levels, your landlord could be held responsible.

2. Renovations to your apartment and the risk of lead exposure

- Lead exposure is often caused by recent renovations in an apartment or home.
- A landlord who owns a building built before 1978 must give tenants a written 30-day notice before doing any repairs or renovations that may disturb lead paint.
- A landlord who owns a pre-1978 building must also follow Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines when doing any maintenance activities.
- EPA guidelines state that renovations must be performed in a way that minimizes lead exposure.
- Landlords may be penalized if they do not follow the EPA guidelines

3. Lead Abatement

- Lead abatement means any work that is done to lower the risk of lead exposure.



- The landlord may have to pay for lead abatement if your child's level of lead is very high (15-19).
- The landlord is required to post that the building is not lead-safe if a tenant has a very high lead level.
- In these high exposure cases the State must give the landlord 30 days to remove, replace, or securely and permanently cover the lead hazard. However, the State may give the landlord an extension or waiver.

- The program will also work with your landlord to help him or her apply for lead abatement loans or start lead abatement work in the building.

**When should I contact PTLA?**

If you have concerns about lead exposure in your apartment. Examples include:

1. Chipped paint by window pane/sill
2. Chipped ceiling pant
3. Recent renovations done by landlord

**What is the Maine State Lead Prevention Program?  
1-866-292-3474**



- This is a reliable public resource for you and your family when you have any questions/concerns regarding lead in your home
- When your child is screened for lead with a blood test, all results are automatically sent to the Maine State Lead Prevention Program.
- If your child tests at a very high level, someone from this program will work with you and your family to find the cause of the lead exposure.

If you are having difficulty with your medical provider concerning ordering a blood test or understanding the results of a test.

If the Maine State Lead Prevention Program has contacted you because of a high test level and you want to better understand the process and your rights as a tenant or as a MaineCare recipient.



Prepared by Pine Tree Legal Assistance  
Revised October 2009



**Notice**

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