

# 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.leadlisting.org](http://www.leadlisting.org). You may also contact the Region IV office of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at (404) 562-8994.



**Q: How do I know if my miniblinds are safe?**

**A:** Vinyl miniblinds manufactured outside of the United States might contain lead. It is possible to send a clipping of the miniblinds to a lab for testing, but the best thing to do is to be sure that you purchase lead-safe miniblinds. Check the box that the blinds are sold in for a lead-safe disclaimer. Look for words like “lead safe” or “no lead added”. If you already have vinyl miniblinds in your home and you no longer have their original boxes, be sure to keep them clean by damp dusting them often, and don’t let children mouth or handle the blinds. Also be sure to wash children’s hands if you notice that they have played with or near the miniblinds.

**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: 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



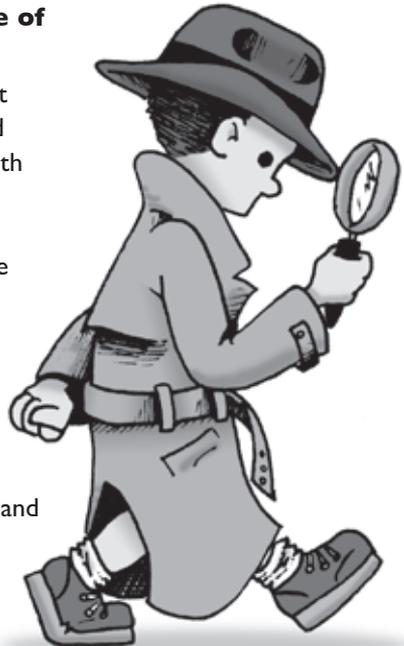
**Q: Are there things that I should never do when working on a pre-1978 home where lead is suspected?**

**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: If I am making repairs or doing some renovations myself, how do I dispose of the waste?**

**A:** All construction & demolition waste that is painted with lead-based paint can be placed in plastic bags (if possible) and disposed of with your household garbage. Unpainted and latex painted wastes can be disposed of along with your household garbage or may be acceptable for disposal at a construction and demolition debris landfill. Additional information about scheduled collection days or solid waste collection sites can be obtained from your county or city. 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: 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 your local DHEC public health department or call DHEC's South Carolina Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at

**(803) 898-0412**

or toll-free at

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



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

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

Brought to you by the  
South Carolina Department of Health  
and Environmental Control's  
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program.



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of the public and the environment.*

Division of Children's Health

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