



Get the Lead Out
Facts About
Housekeeping Tips to Reduce Lead Exposure

Certain housekeeping methods can reduce the amount of lead dust in your home. By reducing dust, these easy cleaning tips can prevent lead poisoning and lower blood lead levels. Before cleaning, all areas that display flaking or peeling paint need to be repaired. Please contact the Illinois Department of Public Health at 217-782-3517 for information on repairing or renovating your home or for a list of licensed lead inspectors and contractors.

Cleaning Supplies

- Latex or rubber gloves
- Paper towels or disposable rags
- All-purpose detergent **OR** cleaning detergent made for removing lead dust (can be found in most hardware or home improvement stores)
- Heavy-duty plastic garbage bag(s) or 6 mil poly bag(s)
- Three one-gallon buckets, one with a mop squeezer
- Sponge
- String mop
- Water
- Contact paper or duct tape

Before Starting

1. Do not allow children, pets or pregnant women into the area until cleaning is complete.
2. Do not eat, drink, chew gum or tobacco, or smoke during the cleaning process.
3. Wear clothing that can be easily washed and latex gloves to protect hands from the detergent. Also, be sure to wash hands after cleaning.

Cleaning Methods

1. Vacuum all surfaces using a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) vacuum or a vacuum with a HEPA filter. Start with the ceiling and work down the walls. Be sure to vacuum shelves, tops of doors, windows and upholstered furniture. Vacuum the floor last. **Do not use a regular vacuum cleaner to pick up lead paint chips and dust.** Lead dust particles are too small to be caught by the filter in a household vacuum and will be scattered into the air.
2. After thoroughly vacuuming, wet-wash all hard surfaces (floors, counter tops, window wells and sills, etc.). Always use a three-bucket system. Add detergent to the first bucket, diluting according to manufacturer's instructions. Put the mop squeezer on the second bucket and use it to hold dirty water. Add clear water to the third bucket for rinsing. When separate detergent and rinse buckets are used, the detergent solution stays cleaner.
 - a. Put sponge or mop into detergent bucket (bucket #1). Squeeze out extra detergent into second bucket (#2) and wash one area.
 - b. Rinse out sponge or mop in rinse water (#3) and squeeze excess into second bucket (#2). On dirty surfaces, rinse sponge or mop several times (#3) after wiping the floor. Change rinse water often, at least twice in each room.
 - c. Repeat above process (#1, #2, wash area, #3, #2).
 - d. After cleaning, the floor should be rinsed. Clean out the buckets. Repeat the above process, using plain water instead of detergent solution in the first bucket (#1, #2, rinse area, #3, #2).

3. Be sure to change rags and mop heads frequently, so lead dust is removed and not just smeared around. If rags and mop heads are to be washed and reused, run one cycle of clear water through the washing machine before doing other laundry.
4. Wait at least two hours. Repeat cleaning and vacuuming processes to remove any dust that may have settled.

Proper Disposal of Cleaning Supplies

1. Once finished, put dirty towels, rags, mops and sponges into heavy-duty plastic (6 mil poly) bags. Seal each bag tightly with tape or a tie and place in regular garbage. Keep cleaning materials and garbage out of reach of children and pets.
2. Pour dirty water into the toilet instead of the sink, so the lead does not contact food preparation areas.
3. Do not burn lead-contaminated materials because lead can be absorbed by breathing the smoke and fumes.
4. Wash clothes worn during cleaning separately from other clothing. Also, wet-wipe cleaning tools and discard these towels and rags with other cleaning materials.

Other Housekeeping Tips

Once the house is clean and in good condition, follow these tips so dust is not allowed to build up.

1. Wet-wash hard surfaces and vacuum floors weekly to control dust levels.
2. To prevent tracking lead dust into the home, remove shoes when coming indoors or place mats or rugs at the door to wipe shoes.
3. Install contact paper over painted shelves where food is stored and over chipping paint. Be sure to check the condition of the contact paper. Replace it as it gets old and does not stick well to the surface. Heavy tape, such as duct tape or electrical tape, can be placed on window sills, stair rails and table edges as a temporary barrier to prevent children from being exposed to chipping paint or lead dust.
4. Consider sealing surfaces, so cleaning is easier. For example, waxable tile, vinyl and wooden floors should be properly maintained.
5. Consider replacing the carpet, since it is hard to thoroughly clean. Please contact the Illinois Department of Public Health at 217-782-3517 for instructions on safely removing carpet containing lead dust.
6. Wet-wipe other flat surfaces where dust collects -- for example, television screens, table tops, crib rails, stair steps and doorknobs -- weekly.
7. Be sure to clean areas that rub against a leaded surface weekly. These areas include doors and windows. Pay special attention to the window trough, the inner part between the window sill and the storm window.
8. Remove or replace miniblinds unless you are sure they do not contain any lead. If this is impossible, soak blinds in detergent in a bathtub for 10 minutes.
9. If someone in the household works with lead, be sure he or she removes work clothes carefully. Launder these clothes separately. Also, make sure the person showers and washes his/her hair as soon as possible after work. If possible, use shower facilities at work, so lead dust is not carried into your vehicle and into your home.

For more information on lead poisoning, please contact the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 217-782-0403, 800-545-2200, or TTY (hearing impaired use only) 800-547-0466; or call your local health department.