



Attorney General  
of New York  
**Letitia James**

**Dear New Yorkers:**

Protecting the health and well-being of children is one of our most important responsibilities. It's also one of the most difficult, especially when some threats – such as lead poisoning – are not easy to see. Children can come into contact with dangerous amounts of lead in their homes – especially those built before 1978 – by breathing in dust, or handling and ingesting paint chips from old lead paint. The result can be serious, and sometimes irreversible, harm to their health.

This brochure explains the dangers posed by lead paint and dust in the home and provides ways to safeguard your child from lead poisoning.

We can work together to protect the health of New York's children by preventing household lead paint poisoning.

Sincerely,

*Letitia James*

# Resources

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**New York State Office of the Attorney General**

(800) 771-7755  
ag.ny.gov

**Environmental Protection Bureau**

Albany: (518) 776-2400  
New York City: (212) 416-8446  
Buffalo: (716) 853-8404

**Learn More**

The following federal, state, and local government resources will provide you with more information about protecting your child from household lead paint poisoning:

**New York State Department of Health  
Lead Poisoning Prevention**

For local and regional prevention programs:  
[health.ny.gov/environmental/lead](http://health.ny.gov/environmental/lead)

**Centers for Disease Control Lead Poisoning Prevention**

[cdc.gov/nceh/lead](http://cdc.gov/nceh/lead)

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

[www2.epa.gov/lead](http://www2.epa.gov/lead)

For listings of lead safe contractors:

[cfpub.epa.gov/flpp/pub/index.cfm?do=main.firmSearch](http://cfpub.epa.gov/flpp/pub/index.cfm?do=main.firmSearch)



# Lead Paint Poisoning

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Keep Your Home  
and Your Children Safe



Office of The New York State  
Attorney General

**Letitia James**

## Lead Paint and Dust in the Home is Dangerous to Children

Before it was banned in household paints in 1978, lead was a common ingredient in paints applied to both the interior and exterior of homes. If your home was built before 1978, it is likely to contain at least some lead-based paint.

Lead-based paint in the home is especially dangerous when it deteriorates. Dust created when paint is worn down – such as on sliding windows, stairs, and railings – can be inhaled or swallowed by your child, exposing them to lead. Children can be exposed to lead in paint that is chipping, flaking, or peeling when it is handled or eaten. Home repair activities that disturb painted surfaces, creating chips or dust, can also expose children to lead.

Outside your home, children can be exposed to lead by playing in dirt that has been contaminated by lead paint that has chipped or peeled from your house's exterior.

## The Dangers

Lead is highly toxic, especially to children under 7 years old. No safe blood lead level in children has been identified. Even small amounts can cause many health problems, including harming your child's ability to learn and read, attention deficits, hyperactivity, irritability, and other behavioral problems. Many of lead's health effects can be permanent. At high levels, lead can cause brain damage and even death.

## Has Your Child Been Exposed to Lead

New York State law requires that your child be lead-tested by a health care provider at age 1 and again at the age of 2. In addition, at every well-child visit up to age 6, health care providers must ask you about any contact your child might have had with lead and to test again if there has been a chance of exposure. Because it often occurs with no obvious symptoms, lead poisoning frequently goes unrecognized in children.

A blood test is the only way to determine if your child has been exposed to lead. In general, if you have any concerns about your child and lead, you should ask your health care provider if your child should be tested. Be sure to follow up and ask what the test results mean.

## Making Your Home More Lead-Safe

The best way to protect your child from lead in the home is to limit their potential contact with it. You should:

- Immediately repair any peeling, flaking, or chipping paint in your home, or areas – such as window frames – where the paint is being worn down. If you are doing the repairs yourself, call your local health department to find out about using lead-safe home repair methods.
- Wash your child's hands and toys frequently, as they may become contaminated with lead dust.
- Use mops, cloths, and paper towels, dampened with water, to clean windowsills, window wells and other horizontal surfaces throughout your home every 2 to 3 weeks.
- Create barriers to keep your child away from lead hazards if deteriorating paint surfaces can't be fixed immediately. Close and lock doors to rooms with chipping, flaking, or peeling paint – or use contact paper or duct tape to temporarily cover the deteriorating surfaces.
- Check the exterior of your home, including porches and fences, for cracking, flaking, peeling or otherwise deteriorating paint that may contaminate soil in your yard with lead. To avoid tracking lead-contaminated soil into your home, place doormats outside and inside all entryways and remove your shoes before entering. Additionally, do not allow children to play in areas where soil that may be contaminated.

## Paying for Testing

For families with private insurance, lead screening for children at high risk of exposure is covered under the federal Affordable Care Act. Check with your insurance provider to find out what's included in your plan. In addition, Medicaid pays for lead testing for all enrolled children.

You can also contact your county health department to see if it has lead testing clinics or arranges for testing of children who lack health insurance coverage.

For more information about having your child tested for lead, contact the New York State Department of Health at 800-458-1158 or visit their website at: [health.ny.gov/environmental/lead](http://health.ny.gov/environmental/lead).

## Know Your Rights

Whether you rent, own or are planning to buy a home, you should be aware of your rights. Lead hazard protection laws require:

- Landlords to maintain safe conditions in your home. If you are concerned that lead-based paint in your home may present a health hazard, discuss necessary repairs with your landlord. If you are unsatisfied with your landlord's response, contact an attorney or a legal aid services office (visit [www.lawhelpny.org](http://www.lawhelpny.org) to find free legal aid assistance programs near you).
- Sellers and landlords to disclose known lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards to buyers or renters of pre-1978 housing.
- Contractors performing renovation, repair, and painting projects in homes built before 1978 are to be EPA certified and follow specific work practices to prevent lead exposure.

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If you believe anyone is violating these laws, contact your county health department or the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency at **(800) 424-5323**.

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If you or your landlord are using a contractor to perform improvements that may disturb lead-based paint in your home, make sure they use a EPA Certified Lead-Safe Contractor.

You can find a list of lead-safe contractors in your area at: [cfpub.epa.gov/flpp/pub/index.cfm?do=main.firmSearch](http://cfpub.epa.gov/flpp/pub/index.cfm?do=main.firmSearch)

Children and pregnant women should not be present in homes during renovation, repair and painting projects that may disturb lead-based paint.