



Lead Poisoning Fact Sheet for **PREGNANT & BREASTFEEDING WOMEN**

A person is lead poisoned when too much lead gets into their body. Lead can be in many everyday materials around us including paint, dust, and soil. Lead poisoning is a serious but preventable disease. Exposure to lead-based paint is the leading cause of lead poisoning in the United States.

Possible effects of maternal lead poisoning:

- Inability to become pregnant or maintain a healthy pregnancy
- Higher risk of miscarriage
- High blood pressure during pregnancy

Lead poisoning can cause damage to the brain and nerves of a baby. Possible effects of lead poisoning to a baby:

- Lowered intelligence
- Decreased coordination
- Short attention span
- Aggressive behavior
- Learning disabilities



HOW LEAD CAN BE TRANSFERRED FROM MOM TO BABY:

During pregnancy, lead can be transferred to the unborn baby through the placenta in women with high blood lead levels. In addition, these high blood lead levels can transfer lead to the baby through breastfeeding. If you are concerned about the possibility of lead exposure during pregnancy or while breastfeeding, discuss this with your doctor.

If one or more of the risk factors below apply to you ask your doctor if he/she recommends a blood lead test. Risk Factors for Lead Exposure:

- Born outside of the United States
- Practice pica (ingesting nonfood items)
- Live in a home built before 1978
- Diet low in calcium, iron, and vitamin C
- Use of alternative remedies, medicines, or cosmetics made outside of the United States
- Eat foods and use consumer products containing lead
- Make or use lead-glazed ceramic pottery
- Work in or have household member(s) who work in a lead-related job, or have a hobby that involves lead use

Follow these simple steps to protect yourself and your unborn baby from lead exposure:

- Avoid being in a home built before 1978 when it is being renovated, repaired, or remodeled. Dust from lead-based paint can be easily inhaled during these activities.
- Treat all peeling paint as if it has lead. Do not remove old paint with a dry method like sanding - this will create lead-contaminated dust.
- Some herbal remedies, such as Azarcon and Greta, may have a lot of lead. Also, lead may be in alternative cosmetics, food additives, and medications from outside of the United States.
- Do not cook, store, or make food in leaded crystal and ceramic pottery.
- If exposed to lead at work, do not bring lead home - change into clean clothes at work before coming home and wash work clothes separately.
- Eat healthy meals and snacks. Eat foods high in iron and calcium every day such as lean meat, chicken, tuna, turkey, peas, cereal, potatoes with skin, cheese, milk, and yogurt. They limit the amount of lead that can get into your body.
- Avoid the use of cigarettes and alcohol.
- When using tap water that may contain lead only use cold water for drinking, cooking, and for making baby formula. Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead. Most of the lead in household water usually comes from the plumbing in the house that may have lead or lead solder, not from the local water supply.