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Lead Poisoning Lasts a Lifetime



Fall is a great time to get out your tools and tackle that

home improvement project! Before you pick out floor tiles and wallpaper, however, ask yourself these two important questions:

1. Was my home built before 1978?
2. Do any children under age 6 live in—or routinely visit—my home?

If you answered 'yes' to both of those questions, you must take steps to prevent a child from being poisoned by lead.

What is the problem?

Prior to 1978, lead was added to household paint because it made the paint more durable, more water-resistant, and enhanced certain colors. Once experts realized the danger it posed to young children, lead in household paint was banned. But a home older than 1978 might still have lead paint on its surfaces. It might be a problem even if the home has been repainted since 1978.

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Product Overload: A Dangerous TikTok Trend

'Product overload' is a new trend on the video sharing app TikTok in which people film themselves pouring and spraying large amounts of multiple cleaning products into one sink or toilet bowl. The result is massive amounts of foamy, soapy, colorful swirls. This may seem harmless but our experts warn that combining cleaning products is dangerous. We thought this

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POISON TRIVIA

One morning in 1942, an accident at the Oregon State Mental Hospital severely sickened over 250 patients and staff, and 47 people died. What happened?

Answer on page 4

How can a home renovation project cause lead poisoning?

Anytime you scrape, sand, or cut into surfaces painted with lead paint—even if the paint is covered by layers of newer paint—you create invisible lead dust. The dust drifts and settles on places where



babies and young children crawl and play. They swallow lead when they put their dust-covered hands and toys in their mouths.

Furthermore,

lead is reportedly sweet-tasting, which may encourage young children to eat chips of peeling paint, or chew on painted surfaces such as a windowsill.

How does lead make children sick?

Though lead is unsafe for people of any age, young children are particularly at risk because their nervous system, brain, and organs are still growing and developing. Their bodies absorb lead more readily than adults. Lead interferes with their growth and development. This can lead to lowered IQ, learning disabilities, behavior problems, and hearing problems. *This damage is permanent.*

Lead can be a sneaky poison. Children who are exposed to low or moderate levels of lead may not look or feel sick, even though the damage to their bodies is occurring. The effects of long-term exposure to lead may not be seen until a child starts school and begins to show signs of behavior and learning problems.

At very high levels, lead exposure can cause seizures, coma, and even death.

Damage from childhood lead poisoning is permanent.

How can I protect my family?

By law, anyone who is paid to perform work that disturbs paint in homes, childcare facilities, or preschools built before 1978 must be certified through a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved lead-safe work practices program. This law is called the **Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule**. Do not hesitate to ask anyone you hire to demonstrate that they are an official Certified Lead-Safe Renovator.

If you plan to do the work yourself, read the [EPA guide Steps to Lead-Safe Renovation, Repair, and Painting](#). The guide is available online at www.epa.gov/lead or call 1-800-424-LEAD. It will explain the correct way to:

- Prepare a work site using plastic sheeting and other tools,
- Control the dust during the project,
- Safely clean up a job site.



The guide also explains how to protect your children from the lead dust which may settle on your clothes, hair, and hands while you are

working on your home. It is important to clean yourself properly before you have any contact with your children.

Can adults be poisoned by lead?

Yes, although this occurs less often than in children. Adults' brains and bodies are at less risk for the

might be a good time to revisit an archived article on cleaning product safety.

A four year old girl picked up a bottle of blue window cleaner and took a sip because it looked like her favorite treat: blue fruit punch.

A man accidentally sprayed grill cleaner, a strong corrosive alkali, into his face and suffered a chemical burn to his eyes.

A toddler was rushed to the hospital with vomiting and severe drowsiness after biting into a concentrated laundry detergent pod.

Stories like these are all-too-familiar to the experts at the Blue Ridge Poison Center. Cleaning products are the second leading cause of poisoning cases reported to poison centers nationwide.



Many cleaning products resemble familiar foods and beverages. Store them safely to prevent someone from accidentally swallowing them.

Children under age 6 are particularly at risk. They are naturally curious and tend to put things into their mouths. They are attracted to the bright

Cleaning products are the *second* leading cause of poisoning cases reported to poison centers.

colors and sweet smells of cleaning products. Many come in packaging that is easy to open, and are often stored in places small children can easily reach.

Adults are at risk for poisoning from cleaning products, too. Some products, including bleach, are *caustic*, meaning they can cause burns when swallowed or when splashed onto the skin or into the eyes. Mixing certain products together could create a poisonous gas that causes coughing and serious breathing problems. Transferring a product into a container normally used for food or beverages, such as an empty soda bottle, can lead to someone eating or drinking it by mistake.

Protect yourself and your loved ones with these cleaning product safety tips:

- Keep cleaning products in one place, food and beverages in another.
- Store all cleaning products up high, out of the sight and reach of children.
- Before using any product, read the label and follow the instructions.
- Use one product at a time. Mixing products together can create a poisonous gas.
- Keep all products in their original, labeled containers so that someone does not eat or drink them by mistake.

learning and behavior problems associated with lead poisoning in developing children. But being exposed to a large amount of lead can still cause health effects in adults, including problems with blood pressure, kidney function, muscle weakness, joint problems, or reproductive problems. It is important to take steps to limit your exposure to lead while renovating an old home. The EPA guide mentioned above also covers these steps, which include:

- Wearing the proper protective gear.
- Using respiratory protection
- Avoiding risky behaviors such as eating, drinking, or smoking in the work area.
- Cleaning your hands and body properly after working.

If you have any concerns that someone may have been exposed to lead, whether or not they are experiencing any health effects, contact the Blue Ridge Poison Center for advice: 1-800-222-1222. The call is free and confidential.

Poison Trivia Answer: The cook sent an assistant to a storeroom to get powdered milk for a large batch of scrambled eggs. The assistant accidentally grabbed a bag of sodium fluoride — also a white powder—which the facility was using to kill roaches.

News & Notes



Dr. Christopher Holstege

The Blue Ridge Poison Center's director, Christopher Holstege, MD, recently traveled to Richmond to address Virginia's new **Hemp Task Force**. Dr.

Holstege presented case studies showing the alarming rise in calls to our local poison center about children accidentally eating products laced with delta-8 THC because they looked just like candy. Increasingly, teens and adults consuming products with delta-8 THC are also reporting negative health effects, most notably mental status changes and rapid heart rates.

[Read the full article here.](#)



Photo: Virginians for Safe Cannabis

Virginians for Safe Cannabis does lab testing on delta-8 products sold in the Commonwealth to demonstrate how an unregulated industry is providing unsafe products.

[Visit them on Facebook](#) to see test results and images of look-alike products like this one, which are contributing to the surge in cases of cannabis poisoning in children.

This free, quarterly newsletter is courtesy of the Blue Ridge Poison Center, serving Southwest and Central Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley. We encourage you to print, post, forward, or share in any way. Don't miss out! [Join the mailing list](#) to receive future issues.

