

## **Residential Lead Paint: Protecting Your Children from Potential Lead Exposure**

### **What is Lead Poisoning?**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts regulates lead paint through **105 CMR 460**, the **Massachusetts Lead Law**. The goal of the Lead Law is to prevent children from being poisoned through ingestion of lead paint or inhalation of lead dust and requires all lead paint hazards removed or covered in residences built before 1978 where children under the age of six (6) reside. Lead paint hazards include loose lead paint and lead paint on windows and other surfaces accessible to children. Loose paint can refer to paint, other coatings, plaster or putty on a surface that is peeling, flaking, chipping, crumbling, cracking, deteriorated or damaged in any manner.

When paint ages, it can peel, chip and crack, forming lead dust. Lead dust can also be generated from opening and closing windows. This dust can enter the body when it is inhaled. Paint chips or dust may be ingested when objects (i.e., hands, toys) with chips or dust on them are put in one's mouth.

A blood lead level tells you how much lead is in your child's body. There is no safe level of lead in the blood, but a small amount of lead can be found in most children's blood due to the pervasiveness of lead in the environment.

- Most children have lead levels under 5 micrograms per deciliter of blood ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ).
- The Massachusetts Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP) and current Lead Law defines Blood Lead Level of Concern as a concentration of lead in whole venous blood in a child under six years of age between **5 and 10 micrograms per deciliter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ )**.
- The CLPPP and the Lead Law defines lead poisoning as a medical condition present in a child under six years of age in which the child has a concentration of lead in whole venous blood of **10 micrograms per deciliter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ) or greater**.

A blood test is the only way to determine if a child has lead poisoning. Lead can affect the brain, nervous system, and kidneys in children. But lead poisoning is preventable.

### **What Can You Do to Protect Your Children?**

Have your children screened for lead and talk to your child's doctor about lead.

- According to the Lead Law, all children must be screened once between the ages of nine months and 12 months, and again at ages two and three.
- In addition, children who live in one of the cities and towns at high risk for childhood lead poisoning, must be screened at age four.

Remove potential lead-containing dust.

- Clean up dust by wet wiping dusty surfaces often, especially window sills and floors around windows, and HVAC components and vents.
- Wash your children's hands and toys.

Provide your children with healthy foods.

- Foods with calcium, iron and vitamin C can help prevent lead poisoning.
- Have/help your children wash their hands before eating.

Have your residence inspected for lead.

- If you rent, ask your landlord for the Letter of Full Compliance for your residence, or request your landlord have the residence inspected.
- Inspections must be done by a licensed **lead inspector**.
- If lead paint hazards are found during the inspection, the owner must remove or cover them in accordance with the Lead Law (Please note that you may have to relocate during deleading activities. If this is the case, your landlord must find you a place to stay until the work is completed.).

## What to Know Before You Lease or Buy

When you lease a residence or residential unit that was built before 1978, the owner must provide the tenants with the following documents before they sign a rental agreement, even if they do not have children under the age of six (6).

- The Tenant Lead Law Notification and Certification Form;
- A copy of the most recent lead inspection and/or risk assessment report, if they exist;
- A copy of any Letter of Compliance or Letter of Interim Control, if either exists; and
- Any information about lead paint in the residence.

An owner cannot avoid liability by asking tenants to sign an agreement that they accept the presence of lead paint. In addition, an owner cannot evict or refuse to rent to anyone because of lead paint.

When you buy/sell a residence built before 1978, the current owner must give the buyer:

- The Property Transfer Lead Paint Notification Form;
- A signed Property Transfer Lead Paint Certification Form;
- Any information about lead in the residence;
- A copy of any lead inspection report;
- Letter of Compliance or Letter of Interim Control; and
- A 10-day period to have the residence inspected for lead paint at the buyer's expense prior to the signing of the Purchase and Sale Agreement.



## Assistance

Harvard EH&S is available to assist and support residents of Harvard properties with issues relating to potential lead hazards, potential lead poisoning and general Lead Law compliance.

EH&S (Cambridge Campus)

46 Blackstone St,  
Cambridge MA, 02139  
617-495-2060

[www.ehs.harvard.edu/buildings-facilities](http://www.ehs.harvard.edu/buildings-facilities)

EH&S (Longwood Campus)

107 Ave. Louis Pasteur,  
Boston, MA 02115  
617- 432-1720

Additional information regarding blood lead screening, lead poisoning, potential lead health effects, and a listing of High-Risk Communities in Massachusetts can be obtained from:

CLPPP

MA Department of Public Health

1-800-532-9571 (toll free)

[clppp@state.ma.us](mailto:clppp@state.ma.us)

[www.mass.gov/dph/clppp](http://www.mass.gov/dph/clppp)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics

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

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control

[www.hud.gov/offices/lead](http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead)