



Tips for Parents

Lead and Nutrition



Lead poisoning

If your home was built before 1978, there may be lead in it. Lead can be in paint, in dust from lead paint, in soil, and in water pipes. When lead gets into the body, it is a poison that can harm your child.

Lead poisoning is most dangerous for children younger than age six because even a small amount of lead can affect their ability to learn and cause other serious health problems.

You can protect your children from lead poisoning by keeping your house free of lead hazards and giving your children healthy food. When children eat the right foods, their bodies absorb less lead.

The only way to know if your child has been exposed to lead is to have him or her screened. Your child should be screened for lead poisoning:

- Once in the first 15 months.
- Twice in the first three years.
- Once a year, ages three to six.

In Rhode Island, lead screening tests for children younger than age six are free.

Choose nutrient-rich foods

Calcium – helps stop your body from storing lead in your bones

- Milk and yogurt
- Cheese and tofu
- Leafy green vegetables (kale, broccoli, and spinach)
- Ice cream, food made with milk or cheese
- Orange juice or juice with added calcium

Iron – helps protect the body from lead

- Lean meats and fish
- Dried fruits
- Peanut butter and nuts
- Beans
- Leafy green vegetables
- Eggs
- Iron-fortified cereals

Vitamin C – helps the body absorb iron

- Oranges and grapefruits
- Melons and berries
- Tomatoes
- Cauliflower and broccoli
- Sweet potatoes

Practice good nutrition and hygiene to help your child absorb less lead

Prepare and Store Food Safely

- Wash dusty areas in your kitchen with warm soapy water and a wet mop or cloth.
- **Never use hot water from the faucet for drinking or cooking.** It is easier for lead from pipes to get into hot water.
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables with cold water before eating or cooking them.
- Store food in clean plastic or glass containers.
- Do not cook, serve, or store food in containers that may contain lead like crystal, ceramic, silver, or pewter dishes.
- Bake or broil foods. Don't fry foods. High fat foods make the body absorb more lead.

Protect Your Child

- Keep your child's play areas free of dust and dirt.
- **Wash your children's hands before they eat.**
- Do not let your child eat food that has fallen on the floor.
- Eat meals and snacks at the table.
- Feed your children three meals and one or two low-fat snacks each day. Children absorb less lead if their stomach is full.

Additional Resources

Nutrition Programs

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, 401-277-5270

Provides nutrition education for adults and youth through small groups and home visits.

Women Infants and Children (WIC), 401-222-5960

The WIC Program provides nutritious foods to pregnant women, women who are breastfeeding, and children younger than age five.

Certificates of Lead Conformance

Ask to see the Certificate of Lead Conformance, which is required by law for most rental properties built before 1978.

Visit health.ri.gov/healthrisks/poisoning/lead to search for your address's Certificate of Lead Conformance.



Call the Health Information line at **401-222-5960** or **visit www.health.ri.gov/lead**