



# Tips for Pregnant Women

## Protect Your Baby from Lead While you are Pregnant



### What is lead poisoning and how can it harm my baby?

Lead is a poison that can harm you and your baby. If you are exposed to lead while you are pregnant, you and your baby could become lead poisoned. Exposure to lead can cause high blood pressure in pregnant women and can increase your chance of having a miscarriage. Babies that are lead poisoned might be born too early or with a low birth weight. They can also have lower IQ levels and learning problems.

### Where does lead come from?

Lead can be found in many places in and around your home if it was built before 1978. It is in peeling and chipping lead paint; in the soil around your home; in tap water; or in pottery, crystal, or ceramic dishes. Lead can get into your body from:

- breathing the dust from lead paint
- drinking tap water that has lead in it
- eating fruits or vegetables that were grown in soil that has lead in it
- eating food made, served, or stored in dishes made with lead
- home improvement projects done without protection from lead
- lead dust brought home from workplaces or from hobbies

### How do I protect my family against lead?

#### **Clean your home when you see dust or chipping paint.**

Wash all painted surfaces, floors, and dusty areas with a wet mop or wet cloth. Use warm soapy water and rinse often. Cover chipped paint with contact paper or duct tape.

#### **Be careful during home repairs.**

Removing lead paint in your home makes dust that can harm you and your baby. Before doing repairs in your home, make sure to hire a licensed professional.

#### **Remove lead from work clothes and shoes.**

If you or someone who lives in your home works in plumbing, welding, construction, factory work, painting, repairing radiators, or renovating homes, make sure that work clothes and shoes are taken off right after coming home. Work clothes should be washed separately from other laundry.

#### **Avoid lead in crafts and hobbies.**

Some materials used in crafts contain lead. These include solder, paint, and ceramic glazes. Try not to use these materials when you are pregnant. Avoid projects where you are sanding lead paint. Cosmetics, jewelry, and charms made in other countries may also contain lead.

---

## How do I protect my family against lead

continued

### **Eat healthy foods.**

- Eat foods high in calcium, iron, and vitamin C. These foods can protect you and your baby from lead. Meats, milk, cheese, and vegetables like spinach and kale are all good options. Avoid fatty foods, which can make your body absorb lead faster.
- Test your soil before you grow any fruits or vegetables. Plant your garden at least three feet from the outside walls of your home to avoid paint chips. Wash fresh fruits and vegetables with cold water before you eat or cook them.

### **Wash your hands often.**

Lead dust from around your home and in the soil can get on your hands. Always wash your hands before making and eating food.

### **Store food in clean plastic or glass containers.**

Crystal, pottery, ceramic, silver, or pewter dishes may have lead. Do not cook, serve, or store food and drinks in these containers. Store all food in clean plastic or glass containers. Do not store food in cans after the cans are opened.

### **Run cold tap water for at least one minute before drinking it and cooking with it.**

Some water pipes are made with lead, and the lead can get into tap water. Never use hot tap water for cooking or drinking because it can have more lead in it from pipes.

### **Screening for lead:**

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.*

---

## Additional Resources

### **Nutrition Programs**

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

Provides nutrition education for adults and youth in 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](http://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](http://www.health.ri.gov/lead)**