

Keep Your Children Safe When You Renovate!

Scraping, sanding, and painting are common activities for home owners during renovation projects. But did you know that these activities may actually put your child at serious risk for lead poisoning?

Where is Lead Found?

The most common sources of lead homes are deteriorating lead paint and lead dust found in older homes. Homes built before 1978 usually contain lead paint on both interior and exterior surfaces. Lead remains poisonous indefinitely. It lingers in peeling paint chips and in the paint dust that forms as older homes age. Because lead is so common in older homes, renovation and remodeling activities can cause the release of lead into the air or onto flat surfaces such as floors and window sills.



Who is at Risk?

Children between the ages of 9 months to 3 years are at the greatest risk for lead poisoning. They are growing rapidly and are able to absorb more lead into their bodies. Crawling, walking, and using their mouths to check out just about everything in their environment are common activities in these toddlers. But they are not the only ones who are at risk. Pregnant women can also absorb lead into their bodies. Some of this lead can pass from them to their unborn baby through the umbilical cord. Even the family pets can suffer from lead poisoning.

The renovators themselves and any family members who stay in the home during renovations are also at risk. Many of the tasks associated with renovation in older homes, release lead into the air and onto surfaces.

How Does Renovation Pose a Risk?

Renovation projects can be divided into two main categories: the kind attempted by home owners or renters, and the kind needing a professional contractor. Demolition of buildings or parts of buildings, plumbing updates, and electrical rewiring are often delegated to contractors. Relatively simple projects such as sanding, scraping and / or painting rooms or even buildings are often done by home owners. In both cases, original surfaces that may have been covered by lead-containing paint or varnish will be disturbed. These activities can trigger the release of a lot of lead-based paint chips and lead dust.

What Can Be Done to Reduce this Risk?

Professional contractors are now required by law to provide or arrange for a lead abatement plan to cut down on the amount of lead that the construction stirs up. Not all contractors have been trained in these lead abatement skills. It is important to know if your contractor has been trained in lead abatement. Be sure to ask.

Private homeowners are encouraged to research safe lead practices. There are simple precautions that they can take which will reduce the risk of lead poisoning for themselves, their family members, and even their pets. In Ontario County, the New York State Department of Health Geneva District Office is a valuable resource for safe lead removal practices. They can be reached at 315-789-3030.

For pamphlets and educational brochures about safe lead removal practices please see the links below. (These are large PDF files, so it takes time to download)



What Homeowners need to know about removing lead based paint.

<http://www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/lead/docs/2502.pdf>

Renovate Right: Important lead hazard information for families, childcare providers, and schools.

<http://www.epa.gov/oppt/lead/pubs/renovate-right-eng.htm>

Protect Your Family From Lead in Your Home.

<http://www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/pyfcameraeng.pdf>