

Testing my Home for Lead



There are several ways to test your home for lead.

Some ways to test for lead are better than others. Each method differs in cost, time and accuracy. Most children are lead poisoned from dust created by lead paint. That is why it is important to test paint and dust for lead if you live in a home built before 1950.

Paint and Dust

There are several ways to test paint and dust for lead. Each method has good and bad points.

Home Test Kits

You can use home test kits that you buy at a hardware store to test for lead paint. These tests only tell you if there is lead on the surface. It will not tell you if there is lead paint COVERED by a layer of non-lead paint. For that reason, they are most useful for testing painted wood that is already chipped or damaged. Home test kits are not expensive.

Lead Dust Wipes

Lead dust is the most common way children are poisoned in Maine. You can test for lead dust on floors and window sills in your own home or hire a lead expert to do it for you. You can get a lead dust test kit from the Maine State Lab at 287-8014. Knowing if you have lead dust around window sills or floors can help keep your children safe from lead.

Hiring Lead Experts to test

You can hire a lead expert to test your home. They have equipment that allows them to measure lead in paint, even if it is covered by layers of newer non-lead paint. They can test the whole home or selected rooms. While this option costs the most, it will also tell you the most about your home. You can get a list of lead testing experts by calling 287-2651 or visiting www.maine.gov/healthyhomes. Look for the link called "homeowners".

Soil or Water

In Maine, soil and water don't often cause lead poisoning. But there are times when it may be worthwhile to test soil or water for lead.

Testing your Soil for Lead

If you have a house built before 1950, you should assume there is lead in the soil right next to the house. Don't plant vegetables within 10 feet of the house or let your children play there.

If your children play in the dirt (especially if they often put soil in their mouths) you may want to test the soil for lead. You can get a kit to test soil for lead from the Maine State Lab at 287-8014 or University of Maine Extension at 581-3591.

Testing your Water for Lead

Lead in water comes from the pipes. If your water is corrosive it can dissolve lead solder in the copper pipes.

If your water comes from a public water supply you can call your water company to find out their last test results or to find out how to test your water.

If your water comes from a private well, you can test it for lead and other problems. Testing your well water for lead makes sense if you have a young child or if you notice green staining where your water drips (like the bathtub or sink). Learn how to test your well water at: <http://wellwater.maine.gov> or by calling tollfree in Maine 866-292-3474

Protect your family.

- Check this website: www.maine.gov/Healthyhomes
- Call for advice: 1-866-292-3474 • TTY: 800-606-0215