

Please support the Lead Safe Homes bill

Over 700 children are poisoned by Lead each year in Minnesota

Risk factors for childhood lead exposure

Older housing is more likely to contain lead-based paint

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that more than 80% of all homes built in the U.S. before 1978 contain lead-based paint. Lead-based paint in homes built before 1950 poses greater risk for children because the paint may contain higher concentrations of lead. Average age of housing identifies communities that may be at increased risk of exposing children to lead because of older housing.

Lead-based paint may deteriorate as visible paint chips but is more commonly found as fine dust, which looks like ordinary house dust. Lead-painted windows are a special problem because raising and lowering the window creates lead-based paint dust that settles on floors and window wells, even when new paint is put over the old. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), remodeling old homes can create large quantities of lead dust that may be accidentally inhaled (breathed) or ingested (eaten), especially by children.

Children living in older housing have a greater risk of lead exposure

The map shows the prevalence of older housing in Minnesota. Older housing, especially housing built before 1950, is a risk factor for childhood lead exposure due to the presence of lead-based paint. Lead-based paint was phased out of residential use in 1950 and eventually banned in 1978 in the U.S.

The majority of counties in southwestern Minnesota have higher percentages of pre-1950 housing than other parts of the state. Areas of Hennepin, Ramsey, and St. Louis Counties are known to have a high proportion of old homes, among others. Children living in older homes are at higher risk for lead exposure and are targeted for screening according to MDH guidelines. In Minnesota, 32% of housing was built prior to 1950, while about 57% was built prior to 1980.

Children in poverty have a greater risk for lead exposure

According to the CDC, young children living in poverty or who reside in older housing have a higher risk of lead exposure. The proportion of children living in poverty in Minnesota has consistently remained lower than the national average.

Most recently, about 16% of Minnesota children under 5 years of age live in poverty. Children living in most of the counties in Northern Minnesota are more likely to live in poverty than the state as a whole, and suburban counties generally have a lower percentage of children living in poverty. Ramsey County and areas of Hennepin County have a higher percentage of children living in poverty compared to the Minnesota average. Children in poverty are at higher risk for lead exposure and are targeted for screening according to MDH guidelines.

3 minute Video available: <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/envh10.health.leadpoison/the-effects-of-childhood-lead-poisoning/>