**[What You and Your Family Should Know About Lead](https://ptla.org/what-you-and-your-family-should-know-about-lead)**

**When should I contact PTLA?**

The Lead Paint Project is based in our Lewiston Office. We can help you with questions about lead paint and lead poisoning.

You can call Attorney Lynn Ward (**207-400-3273**) or Paralegal Meghan Lynch (**207-552-3112**)  to ask questions about lead or set up an appointment. All information is free. Your information is kept confidential.

Contact the Lead Paint Project if:

* You're worried about lead in your apartment. Examples include:
  + Chipping or peeling paint on
  + windows and window sills
  + doors or door frames
  + ceilings and floors
  + porches
  + Recent renovations done by landlord
* Your children have had high lead test results. Now they are having trouble concentrating at school or controlling their behavior.
* The Maine Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program has contacted you because of your child’s high blood lead test. You want to better understand the process and your rights as a renter or as a MaineCare recipient.

**What can I do to reduce the risk of lead poisoning in my home?**

**Think about where your child plays**

* Lead paint can be in any home or building built before 1978.
* Pick up any big paint chips and throw them out.
* Do not let your child play near a window sill, door frame, or porch with chipped or peeling paint.

**Think about how to keep lead dust out of your child’s mouth**

* Children are poisoned when lead dust gets into their mouths. It usually comes from their hands and toys.
* Children can also be poisoned by inhaling the lead dust
* Wash children’s hands before they sleep or eat
* Wash children’s toys regularly

**Clean up dust**

* Wash window sills, trim, and other areas children touch using a wet rag or mop.
* Wash floors once a week with a wet mop.
* Learn about how to safely clean up lead dust with [this tipsheet](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/environmental-health/eohp/lead/documents/leadtipsheet2.pdf) [5] from the Maine Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program.
* Take off your shoes when you walk in your door. This will prevent tracking in lead dust from the porch into your apartment

**Test your home for lead levels**

* Contact Attorney Lynn Ward (**207-400-3273**) or Paralegal Meghan Lynch (**207-552-3112**) in Pine Tree’s Lewiston office. They can help answer your questions about testing your home for lead hazards.
* [Request a free lead dust test from the Maine Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program online](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/environmental-health/eohp/lead/lead-kit-request.html) [6]. The web page also has a link to a video that shows how to do the test.
* Get in touch with the Maine Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at **1-866-292-3474** before starting a home repair or before allowing a landlord to start a repair that may disturb lead paint and create dust. Someone from the program can talk with you about the best ways to keep your risk of lead exposure low.

**How do I find out if my child has lead poisoning?**

* The most important thing you can do is **ASK** your child’s medical provider to do the blood test for lead poisoning.
* It is the law in Maine that all children on MaineCare must be given a blood lead test at **12 months and 24 months**.
* Children who are not on MaineCare are still at high risk for lead poisoning at ages 12 months and 24 months. They should be tested if they have lived or are living in homes built before 1978.
* Lead tests are done at 12 months and 24 months because this is when your child is most at risk for lead poisoning.
* This is a high-risk time because children at this age put everything they touch in their mouths. They are often attracted to window sills, and they spend a lot of time on the floor. Both of these are places where lead dust can build up.
* Children under 6 years old who were not checked for lead poisoning at 12 months or 24 months should be tested for lead.
* You should also ask your child’s doctor to do a blood lead test if you move to a new apartment or if there has been construction going on in your home.

Blood testing is important. Many children are poisoned, but don't have any visible symptoms.

**Once I get my child tested, what do the test results mean?**

* Follow up with your medical provider. Make sure you know what the test results were and what the number means.
* Any number at all means that your child has been exposed to lead.
* If your child’s blood lead level is high, someone from the Maine Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program will call you. They will talk with you about possible sources of lead in your home and what to do about it.
* If your child’s blood lead level is high, the Maine Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program will also send a lead inspector to look for the hazards in your home.

**What does my landlord have to do about my child’s lead exposure?**

1. **Written Lead Disclosure**

* If you rent and apartment that was built before 1978, the landlord must give you a written notice that lets you know that there might be lead in the home. This is called a "lead disclosure."
* If your landlord does not do this, they could be fined.

2. **Renovations and the risk of lead exposure**

* Lead exposure is often caused by renovations in an apartment or home.
* A landlord who owns a building built before 1978 must give tenants a written 30-day notice before doing any repairs or renovations that may disturb lead paint.
* A landlord who owns a pre-1978 building must also follow Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines when doing any maintenance activities.
* These guidelines are called Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) rules.
* Under these rules, renovations must be performed in a way that minimizes lead exposure.
* The renovations must be performed by an RRP contractor who is certified to do the work in a lead-safe way.
* Landlords may be penalized if they don't follow the EPA guidelines.

3. **Lead Abatement**

* The state will start a lead investigation if your child has a high blood lead result or a lead dust test shows a high level of lead in the dust in your home.
* The state will order your landlord to hire a lead abatement contractor if the investigations shows that there are lead hazards in your home
* Lead abatement means any work that is done to lower the risk of lead exposure. Your landlord cannot do the lead abatement work unless they are a lead abatement contractor. The work must be done by a lead abatement contractor who knows how to safely remove lead hazards.
* The State inspector will also post a notice of the lead hazard on your building. This notice must stay up until the lead abatement work is finished and the State takes it down. If you see someone remove the notice or you see that it is missing, call the Maine Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention program at 1-866-292-3474 to let them know!
* If you have a child under the age of 6, the State might order your landlord to provide you with a lead-safe apartment to live in while the work is finished.
* If you have any questions about this process contact Megan at the KIDS LEGAL Lead Paint Project in Pine Tree’s Lewiston Office. 207-400-3273.

**What is the Maine Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program?**

* This is a reliable public resource for you and your family. Call them at 1-866-292-3474 if you have questions or concerns about lead in your home.
* When your child gets a lead blood test, all results are automatically sent to this program.
* If your child tests at a very high level, someone from this program will work with you and your family to find the cause of the lead exposure.

The program will also work with your landlord to help them apply for lead abatement loans or find a lead abatement contractor to start lead abatement work.