

Window Safety and Lead

Lead paint applied to old windows presents a potential problem for those concerned about lead poisoning. Lead paint was used on millions of homes throughout the US before it was banned for residential purposes by the Consumer Product Safety Commission in 1978. However, by then, millions of windows coated with lead paint were in place. Today, according to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), some 37 to 38 million homes still have lead paint in them -- about 40% of the US housing stock.

Paint on windows must withstand exposure to sun, freeze/thaw cycles, moisture and temperature differentials. Add to that the surface abrasion involved in the opening and closing of operable windows, and it becomes clear why paint can chip and peel. But it is when the abrasive actions produce a fine powder or dust that lead paint becomes of most concern, especially to children, because the lead is not "locked" into the paint.

Lead-contaminated household dust is a primary cause of childhood lead poisoning in the US today—and one of the sources of lead dust is the friction involved in the opening and shutting of pre-1978 lead-painted windows. Once the lead dust particles develop, they are deposited on windowsills, on the floor, and on any other object or toy that happens to be in the area. Once the lead dust gets on a child's fingers, it usually doesn't take long for the fingers to end up in the young child's mouth, which is when the lead gets ingested, potentially leading to lead poisoning.

A number of dust test kit products are available to consumers who want to know whether or not they have a lead dust problem. The National Safety Council offers a dust test kit both through its website [Lead](#) and via a dedicated toll-free hotline service (1-866-528-3187).

Because old windows painted with lead paint can produce lead dust and lead paint chips, window replacement is a highly recommended and cost-effective strategy to reduce the risk of childhood lead poisoning in older homes. In addition to removing a potential source of lead exposure, window replacement can also add significant energy-savings benefits.

For information on how best to clean old painted windows, go to <http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/citygov/health/lead/keep-kids-safe.html>

For information on how to safely remove and/or repair old painted windows, go to www.ci.mil.wi.us/citygov/health/lead/keep-kids-safe.html

For more information on lead poisoning and its prevention, go to [Lead Poisoning](#) or [Lead](#)

Related Links

- American Architectural Manufacturers Association
- Screen Manufacturers Association
- [Timothy Healy Foundation](#)
- Window Covering Safety Council
- Window & Door Manufacturers Association

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