



MOTHERS & OTHERS FOR CLEAN AIR

HEALTHY INDOOR BREATHING TOOLKIT

PAINTS

For more information about this research, visit
WWW.MOTHERSANDOTHERSFORCLEANAIR.ORG

THE PROBLEM

The most common source of lead air pollution is paint. Homes built before 1978 used lead-based paint that creates dust, chips, and suspended lead particles that can be inhaled. Unlike some types of pollution, lead does not go away over time, and there is no level of exposure to lead that is safe. Lead exposure is harmful to every system in our body by building up in our bones and kidneys. It is especially harmful to children's nervous systems and can harm them for life, causing behavioral problems, lower IQ, seizures, paralysis, and even death.



Chipped Lead Paint



Chipped Lead Paint



More generally, paint contains a type of chemical called **Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)**.

VOCs are a group of chemicals that are connected to negative health effects because of how easy they are to breathe in. A mixture of VOCs in the air can create indoor ozone, a gas that irritates human lungs.

Common paint additives, like nonylphenol ethoxylates and formaldehyde, can also disrupt hormones or cause cancer.

CHEMICALS IN PAINT

VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS:

Applying wet paint/stripper or leaving an open can of paint/stripper in a room releases Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) into the air. A mixture of VOCs in the air can create indoor ozone, a gas that irritates human lungs.



FORMALDEHYDE:

Wet paints can also release a chemical called Formaldehyde while drying. Formaldehyde is a colorless flammable gas that has a strong odor. It has been classified as a known human carcinogen since 2014.



Asthma Inhaler

Exposure to formaldehyde has negative effects on anyone's health but is particularly harmful to those suffering from respiratory diseases or asthma.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT

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TO MY OR MY CHILD'S HEALTH?

HAVING TOXIC PAINT FUMES IN YOUR HOUSE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO...

- Allergies
- Asthma
- Hormone disruption
- Shortness of breath
- Damage to nervous system
- Anemia
- Cancer risk
- Nosebleed
- Irritation of eyes, nose, throat
- Headache fatigue
- Skin rash
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Acute stomach pain
- Constipation
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Memory loss
- Developmental delays
- Loss of appetite



Allergy



Nosebleed



Fatigue

[1] United States Environmental Protection Agency. "Volatile Organic Compounds' Impact on Indoor Air Quality."

[2] National Cancer Institute. "Formaldehyde and Cancer Risk."

[3] United States Environmental Protection Agency. "Lead."

AVOID ANTIMICROBIAL OR ANTIFUNGAL PAINTS

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Avoid paints with VOCs, do not buy paint if it is labeled as “antimicrobial” or “antifungal” (these contain harmful pesticides). Paint should have less than 50g of VOCs per liter. Do not buy oil-based paints. Avoid color additives that are high in VOCs.



Avoid any paints which have the following chemicals: phthalates, glycol ethers, formaldehyde, nonylphenol ethoxylates, mercury, lead. Many of these chemicals are VOCs or carcinogens.

WHAT TO BUY

- Buy paint that is Green Seal GS-11 Certified. This certification limits the levels of pollutants described above.
- Buy water-based latex paints or milk-based paints. These are less toxic and emit fewer pollutants.
- Buy paints with mineral or plant-based pigments. These are less toxic than normal paints.



IF YOUR HOME HAS LEAD PAINT:

If your home was built before 1978 and you suspect it contains lead-based paint or piping, have your home tested for lead and learn about potential lead hazards. You should always hire a certified lead professional to take any steps to reduce lead exposure in your home.



[Click here to find trained professionals with EPA's online tool](#)



Get a lead paint inspection before buying a new house. This inspection tells you whether your home has any lead.



Get a lead paint risk inspection.

These risk inspections can tell if your home has any lead paint hazards, where the hazard is, and what actions are necessary to reduce the hazard.



Locate a trained professional in your area who can evaluate and test your home for lead.

If lead paint is flaking:

The EPA recommends damp-mopping the floors and wiping window ledges with a warm, damp rag and phosphate-containing dishwashing detergent. This removes contaminated dust.



For more information about handling lead paint exposure visit CDC's guide to lead in paint.

IF YOU ARE RENOVATING:



REMEMBER:



Keep remodeling areas separated from living areas.



Do not allow children near the remodeling area.



Keep your home dust free.



Hire a professional to remove any lead paint.



Pregnant people and children should not be in the building until the remodeling is finished.

IF USING PAINT STRIPPERS:

Use only alcohol- or soy-based paint strippers. Other commonly available paint strippers are carcinogens and can be fatal to inhale.





PROTECT YOUR HEALTH BY ALWAYS:



Working only in well-ventilated areas with open windows.



Wearing an N-95 mask or respirator in dusty conditions.



Wearing protective clothing like face masks, protective eyewear, gloves, and coveralls.