

Are your employees taking lead home to their families?

Each year, the California Department of Health Services, Occupational Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (OLPPP), and local health departments investigate many cases of “take-home” lead exposure. Employers, workers, and health care providers are often unaware of this issue.

What is “take-home” lead?

Take-home lead occurs when a worker wears his or her dirty work clothes and shoes home, carrying lead dust from the workplace to the home. This invisible toxic dust settles in the car, on furniture and floors, and in carpets. Young children can swallow this lead dust and be poisoned since they often play on the floor and put their hands in their mouths. Household members handling workers’ clothing can also be exposed.

How can lead hurt children and other family members?

Lead is especially dangerous to children under the age of six and to pregnant or nursing women. Children’s bodies are still growing and developing, so swallowing or breathing lead dust may result in behavioral problems, learning difficulties, and trouble paying attention. In both children and adults, the effects of lead poisoning may not be noticed at first, but can eventually lead to permanent injury. Lead has long

been known to cause reproductive and other harm and is also considered a cancer-causing substance. The only way to know if a child or adult is lead poisoned is to get a blood lead test.

What should be done to prevent take-home lead?

Employers in lead-using businesses need to implement a workplace lead safety program as required by the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA).

Employers should:

- Reduce lead dust and fumes;
- Provide hand washing facilities: warm water, soap, and disposable towels;
- Use HEPA vacuuming or wet clean-up methods;
- Conduct training on lead-safe work practices and on preventing take-home lead;
- Provide clean work clothes and shoes;
- Provide separate storage containers for work and street clothes;
- Provide a clean changing area;
- Know that in jobs where workers are exposed to high levels of lead, shower facilities must be provided; and
- Be aware that parents of a lead-poisoned child may be able to sue you for health-related damages, while a lead-poisoned employee generally cannot.

Employees should:

- Wash their hands and face at the end of the shift;
- Wear work clothes and shoes provided by the employer;
- Change into clean clothes and shoes before they leave work;
- Not wear work clothes and shoes in their vehicles;
- Take a shower at work or as soon as they get home;
- Keep work clothes and shoes separate from clean clothes and shoes; and
- Ask their doctor to test their children for lead.

Prevent take-home lead before it happens!

The devastating effects of childhood lead poisoning due to take-home lead are entirely preventable. This can only happen if employers and employees each take their responsibilities seriously.



Help is available

If you think you have a problem with lead dust in your home or need assistance in testing your children for lead, contact your local health department.

OLPPP can help you and your employees prevent take-home lead problems.

We can provide:

- Assistance in setting up a lead safety program that is tailored to your business.
- Full-length and easy-to-read summaries of Cal/OSHA's lead standards for construction and general industry.
- Worker educational materials on take-home lead issues in English and Spanish.
- Posters with pictures and messages in English and Spanish to post at your jobsite.

For assistance or materials call OLPPP toll-free at 866-627-1587 and/or visit our website at: www.dhs.ca.gov/ohb/OLPPP/leadpub.htm

We have moved to:
850 Marina Bay Parkway
Building P, 3rd Floor
Richmond, CA 94804
(510) 620-5757



California Department of Health Services Occupational Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

Occupational Health Branch
850 Marina Bay Parkway
Building P, 3rd Floor
Richmond, CA 94804
(510) 620-5757
(510) 620-5743 fax
www.dhs.ca.gov/ohb



Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

Kim Belshé, Secretary
Health and Human Services Agency

Sandra Shewry, Director
Department of Health Services

Workplace Lead Helpline:

Toll-free 866-627-1587
CA Relay Service (800) 735-2929

To obtain a copy of this document in an alternate format, please call (510) 620-5757. Please allow at least 10 working days to coordinate alternate format services.

California Department of Health Services
Occupational Lead Poisoning
Prevention Program
Occupational Health Branch
850 Marina Bay Parkway
Building P, 3rd Floor
Richmond, CA 94804