How to protect your family from lead exposure in Mississippi

Young kids are at highest risk for irreversible lead poisoning, and older homes are more likely to have lead lurking in places where small kids can ingest it. But there are easy steps your family can take that will have a big impact on reducing lead exposure in your home.

1. **If you have paint peeling from the wall, assume it has lead in it.** Door jambs and window sills tend to be a major source of lead paint peel, and are easily accessed by young children.

2. **Prevent kids from getting to the area and try to stop the peeling.** If your house was built before 1978, lead paint was probably used. You can chip off a section and get it tested. In Jackson, the city planning office runs a program to remove lead paint from houses. Remember: lead paint chips have a sweet taste, so children tend to put them in their mouths.

3. **Test your water and use a certified lead filter.** Running water for 30 seconds before using is a good way to flush toxins as well.

   Lead is still allowed in plumbing, though it was majorly reduced in 1986. If your home was built before then, you might have lead service lines that run water into the house, or heavily leaded fixtures throughout the home. Ask your plumber if they’ve seen lead plumbing in the neighborhood and contact your water utility about the most recent round of Lead and Copper Rule testing.

4. **You can check results with the EPA here and in Mississippi here.** These results have to be published in your utility’s annual Consumer Confidence Report. Mississippi lists water systems that contain lead service lines here.

5. **Make sure young children are screened for lead exposure with their pediatrician.**

6. **Make sure work boots and tools have a separate storage area, away from young kids.** Don’t forget, lead can be tracked home with dirt and soil, too.

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Read our investigation with Scalawag magazine about childhood lead poisoning in Jackson, Mississippi.