

# Managing lead around the home in Captains Flat

Lead may be found in and around your home. Lead can be hazardous to health but there are many practical ways to prevent lead exposure

## Lead in the environment

Lead is a naturally occurring element and can be found in the environment in many forms, including:

- waste from mines and industrial sources in soil (including mine waste rock and smelter slag)
- lead-based paint on houses built before 1970 and lead paint flakes around structures
- lead dust from industrial and domestic sources in soil, and in roof and wall cavities
- some household products
- some vegetables, plants, eggs and other animal products produced on contaminated soil.

## Lead and your health

Lead can impact on your health by entering the body through drinking lead-contaminated water or eating lead-contaminated food. In the case of children, lead can also enter the body through ingesting soil during playtime. A less common pathway is breathing lead-contaminated dust.

Once in the body, lead can build up over time and potentially cause a range of health problems.

**If you suspect that you or your family have been exposed to lead, visit your doctor for advice.**

Smelter slag and waste rock found near a disused lead mine and smelter. Slag was sometimes historically used as a fill in household yards. Credit: David Langston, EPA.



## Top tips for safety at home

If lead dust is, or is likely to be, present at elevated levels around the home, there are a number of ways to minimise your exposure and your family's exposure.

### Wet-wiping and mopping

- If you live in an older home or close to a lead industry, such as a mine, wash front steps and verandahs at least once a week.
- Wet-wipe benchtops, windowsills, kitchens, furniture and toys using a high-phosphate detergent (such as liquid sugar soap).
- Mop floors using the three-bucket system. **(See over page.)**

### Vacuuming

Ordinary vacuum cleaners do not filter fine lead particles. Use a ducted vacuum cleaner or one with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter. If these are not available, vacuum when young children are not present, allow time for dust to settle and wet-wipe before children return.

### Old carpets

Remove old carpets as they are much harder to clean than hard surfaces. To remove carpet, wet it

first, roll it inwards, wrap it in plastic and tape it up. Mop the floor area once the carpet is removed.

Carpets may need to be safely disposed of if contaminated during renovations.

## Pets

Animal coats may catch considerable amounts of dust, including lead-contaminated dust from inside or outside the home.

- Brush pets outside and ensure that children wash their hands after patting them.
- Wash animal bedding once a week.

## Laundry

- Regularly wash children's toys and blankets using a phosphate detergent, and rinse well.
- Wash work clothes separately and use a phosphate detergent.
- Rinse the washing machine after use to avoid contaminating other clothes.

## Play areas and sandpits

- Move play areas away from bare soil and grow grass or plants in bare areas of dirt.
- Use clean sand in sandpits and cover when not in use.

## Vegetable garden produce

Lead dust in the air may deposit on vegetables, and some vegetables absorb lead from the soil.

- Always use raised vegetable gardens with clean imported soil and wash vegetables before consuming.

## Food producing animals

Even at low levels of lead exposure, food producing animals may have unacceptable levels of lead in the meat, milk or eggs they produce, without showing signs of illness.

- Don't allow backyard chickens to range freely, feed or drink from water sources where contamination is suspected/proven. Contact the Braidwood Local Land Services office to discuss assessment of at-risk livestock.

## Avoid touching lead smelter slag and mine waste rock

- Smelter slag and lead mine waste rock can be found near old mines and smelters.
- They can have very high levels of lead and other contaminants.

- Always wear gloves if you suspect you may touch this material (i.e. gardening or fossicking in areas that may have slag or mine waste).
- Never let children come into contact with smelter slag or mine waste.

## Test for lead paint before renovating

- If you think you may have lead paint in your home, you should consider testing the paint for lead before renovating.
- Lead-paint testing kits are available from many home hardware stores.
- Advice on renovating a home with lead paint is available on the EPA website.

## Where to get advice

- Call the NSW EPA's Environment Line on 131 555.
- Visit the NSW EPA lead safety webpage and watch the videos at [www.epa.nsw.gov.au/leadsafety](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/leadsafety).
- For more information regarding the health effects of lead, please refer to the NHMRC Statement and Information Paper on the health effects of lead at <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/environmental-health/lead-blood-levels>.
- Ask your doctor for information about blood tests and the effects of lead on your health.

### Three bucket system

You will need three buckets (one for a detergent solution, one for dirty water and one for clean water), two mops or rags (one for cleaning with detergent and one for rinsing), and a high-phosphate detergent.

1. Start at the furthest corner from the door.
2. Wet the first mop in the bucket with detergent and wipe the area. Replace the detergent and water for every room or every half hour.
3. Squeeze the first mop into the empty 'dirty water' bucket.
4. Wet the second mop in the 'clean water' bucket and wipe the area to rinse.
5. Squeeze the second mop into the 'dirty water' bucket.

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### NSW Environment Protection Authority

Email: [info@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@epa.nsw.gov.au)

Website: [www.epa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au)

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