

APPENDIX A: FACT SHEETS

FACT SHEET

Lead in Soil

This fact sheet provides general information about lead and its presence in soil, and how to reduce exposure to lead in soil.

What is lead? (pronounced “led”)

Lead is a naturally occurring, bluish-gray metal found in small amounts in the earth’s crust. It has no special taste or smell. Lead can be found in all parts of our environment. Most of it came from human activities like mining, manufacturing, and burning fossil fuels.

Lead has many different uses, most important in the production of batteries. Lead is also used in ammunition, metal products, plumbing, roofing, and devices to shield x-rays. Because of health concerns, lead levels in the environment from gasoline, paints, ceramic products, and caulking have been dramatically reduced in recent years.

How might I be exposed to lead?

- Breathing workplace air (lead smelting, refining, and manufacturing industries).
- Eating lead-based paint chips or lead-contaminated soil.
- Drinking water that travels through lead-soldered pipes.
- Eating food grown in lead-contaminated soil, or eating food and drinking water contaminated with lead dust.
- Inhaling lead dust from hobbies that use lead (stained glass, ceramics).

What happens to lead when it enters soil?

- When released to the air from industry or burning fossil fuels or waste, lead stays in air about 10 days and then falls to the ground. Most of the lead in soil comes from particles falling out of the air.
- Lead in soil does not break down, but lead is changed by sunlight, air, and water into less toxic compounds.
- Lead sticks to soil particles and can be transported to surface water and ground water.

How can lead in soil affect my health?

Past studies have tried to link lead levels in soil with blood lead levels, but no conclusions have been made on how much increased blood lead levels can be expected from exposure to lead in soil. Key factors that help determine the amount of lead ingested are the exposure period and frequency, a person’s age, and lead sources.

Lead exposure is more dangerous for young and unborn children than any other population. Unborn children can be exposed to lead from their mothers. Harmful effects include premature birth, low birth weight, learning difficulties, and reduced growth rate. These effects are more common after exposure to high levels of lead over a period of time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers children to have been exposed to an elevated level of lead if the amount of lead in their blood is at least 10 micrograms per deciliter of blood. To test for blood lead levels, one can consult a physician or the local health department about testing procedures.

How did the Georgia Division of Public Health get involved in investigating my neighborhood?

The Georgia Division of Public Health was asked by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to review soil data collected from residential yards near the former National Smelter & Refining facility in midtown Atlanta. Residents have expressed concern that during facility operations deposits of lead from airborne particles may have contaminated soil in their neighborhoods. In July 2001 and August 2001, EPA found soil lead levels above 400 parts per million (ppm) in 49 residential yards near the facility. EPA has established 400 ppm as the lead screening level in soil. Levels below 400 ppm are considered safe. At this time, EPA is in the process of determining the extent of the removal of contaminated soil.

How can I reduce my exposure to lead in soil?

There are several things you can do to reduce your contact with lead:

- cover bare soil with grass, plants, gravel, or wood chips
- test garden soil for lead
- do not let children play near walls of house or garage, or on bare soil
- have children play in grassy area or sandbox that can be covered
- wash hands after playing or working outdoors
- remove shoes before entering the house
- use a doormat to reduce tracking dust and soil indoors

For More Information, Contact:

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
Division of Public Health
Environmental Health and Injury Prevention Branch
Chemical Hazards Program
2 Peachtree Street, 16th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
(404) 657-6534
www.health.state.ga.us/programs/hazards

Other websites:
www.atsdr.cdc.gov
www.epa.gov/lead



Say Yes
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Lead Test!

BLOOD LEAD LEVEL TESTING FOR CHILDREN UP TO 6 YEARS OF AGE

For residents included in the

Northside Drive Area Lead Investigation

CERCLIS # GAN000407346

Fulton County, Georgia

Where:

Fulton County Department of Health and Wellness
Child Health Care Office, Room 304
99 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive
Atlanta, Georgia
(Located across from Grady Hospital)

When:

October 1 – October 31, 2002
Weekdays, 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

How:

1. Call the Georgia Division of Public Health at (404) 657-6521 and request a blood lead testing information packet
2. Schedule an appointment
3. Have child's blood drawn
4. Receive test result in 7-10 days
5. Get consultation and follow-up services

For information about Blood Lead Testing or the Northside Drive Area Lead Investigation, call the Georgia Division of Public Health, Chemical Hazards Program, at (404) 657-6521.