

WHAT IS LEAD?

Lead is a naturally occurring metal that can be hazardous to human health, especially for children under 6 years of age



WHY IS LEAD A CONCERN?

- 1 in 20 children in Detroit is lead poisoned
- Children with blood lead levels higher than 10 µg/dL* have lead poisoning
- Lead poisoning can cause learning and speech problems, hyperactivity and nerve damage that cannot easily be reversed and are likely to last a lifetime
- The effects of lead poisoning cannot always be seen
- A healthy diet high in vitamin C & D, calcium, zinc and iron can help reduce lead poisoning
- Children become lead poisoned by eating dust, dirt, and paint that contain lead
- All children under 6 should be tested yearly

WHY IS THERE LEAD IN THE SOIL?

- Lead is found naturally in the soil in low amounts
- Most houses built before 1978 have leaded paint inside and outside
- Soil (mainly in large cities) may have high lead levels because of heavy industry and exhaust from leaded gas (banned in 1986)

* µg/dL = microgram lead per deciliter of blood

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Shawn P. McElmurry, Ph.D., P.E.
Civil and Environmental Engineering
(313) 577-3876
www.cee.eng.wayne.edu

Mary O. Dereski, Ph.D.
Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
Family Practice and Public Health Sciences
(313) 577-5597
www.iehs.wayne.edu



1418 Michigan Avenue
Detroit, MI 48216
(313) 285-1249
www.detroitagriculture.org



CLEARCorps/Detroit
11148 Harper Avenue
Detroit, MI 48213
(313) 924-4000
www.clearcorpsdetroit.org/
Brochure designed by CLEARCorps/Detroit



LEAD SAFE GARDENING

WHERE CAN LEAD BE FOUND IN YOUR YARD?

- Lead may be found in the top 4 inches of soil around your yard
- Soil lead is found in highest amounts near the walls of buildings, especially if they were painted prior to 1978
- Soil lead levels can be higher close to roads

WHERE IS LEAD IN THE GARDEN?

- Lead is not usually found in the fruit of the plant like cucumbers, tomatoes, or strawberries
- Lead is most often found in the root of plants like carrots, beets, turnips, potatoes
- Soil with lead can collect on leafy vegetables (collards, kale, turnip greens) especially those close to the ground

WHEN SHOULD YOU BE WORRIED?

When your yard has a soil testing level of

- Below 100 ppm*: safe range, no action needed
- 100-400 ppm*: level of concern, use Best Gardening Practices
- 400-2,000 ppm*: no gardening before contacting a professional gardening group like **The Greening of Detroit**
- Above 2000 ppm*: gardening of any kind is not recommended

* ppm = 1 Parts-Per-Million = 1 milligram Pb per kilogram soil (mg/kg) (Concentration of Lead from soil test)

BEST GARDENING PRACTICES

Yearly Upkeep

- Treat soil with lead free compost
- Till soil as deeply as possible (at least 4 in.)
- Plant your garden away from buildings, garages and the street
- Keeping your soil pH above 6.5 will help limit the amount of lead entering plants



Before/During Gardening

- Wear gloves and wash up after gardening
- Keep a layer of mulch around plants to stop soil from splashing onto leaves during rain
- Do not eat or smoke while gardening
- Wet the soil before working in the garden to keep soil dust down
- Keep children under 6 years old out of gardens with soil lead levels above 100 ppm* because they may eat dirt

After Harvesting/Before Eating

- Wash all vegetables with soap and water or a vinegar water mixture (1 part vinegar to 9 parts water)
- Throw away outer leaves of leafy vegetables, and wash inner leaves well
- Peel and wash root vegetables well (if your soil lead levels are higher than 400 ppm* you should not plant root crops before consulting a professional gardening group)

CLEANING UP AFTER GARDENING

- Wash hands after working in the garden
- Remove shoes/boots before coming into your home
- Keep a separate set of clothes for gardening
- Wash gardening clothes separately

GET YOUR SOIL TESTED!

The suggested local source is the professional gardening group **The Greening of Detroit** (see back)

www.detroitagriculture.org

Other Resources

Michigan Dept. of Community Health
www.michigan.gov/mdch

University of Massachusetts
Soil and Plant Tissue Testing Laboratory
www.umass.edu/soiltest

Accurate Analytical testing LLC
www.accurate-test.com