



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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East Helena Lead Education and Abatement Program

Environmental Assessments

If you are a resident of the East Helena area, you are eligible to receive a free environmental assessment (EA). What is an environmental assessment? Staff of the East Helena Lead Education and Abatement Program (LEAP) will come to your home at your convenience and test for lead in paint, dust, and water.

- **Paint.** In general, the older your home, the more likely it has lead-based paint. Many homes built before 1978 have lead-based paint. The federal government banned lead-based paint from housing that year. Some states stopped its use even earlier. Lead-based paint can be especially hazardous when found on surfaces that children can chew or that get a lot of wear and tear. These areas include:
 - Windows and windowsills.
 - Doors and doorframes.
 - Stairs, railings, and banisters.
 - Porches and fences.

LEAP staff test paint on any surfaces you request using an X-Ray Fluorescence Lead Paint Analyzer (XRF). The XRF can read through 10 layers of paint, which means the test will not mar any paint. The XRF provides an instant reading, and staff will provide a written report containing the test results.

- **Dust.** Household dust can include lead from deteriorating lead-based paint or from soil tracked into a home. Lead dust can form when lead-based paint is dry scraped, dry sanded, or heated, or when painted surfaces bump or rub together. Lead chips and dust can get on surfaces and objects that people touch. Settled lead dust can re-enter the air when people vacuum, sweep, or walk through it. LEAP staff take samples from areas that children are most likely to play in and around. The dust samples are taken to a laboratory for analysis, and LEAP staff provide the results in writing.

Lead in soil can be a hazard when children play in bare soil or when people bring soil into the house on their shoes. If your property has already been sampled for lead and arsenic in the soil outdoors, LEAP staff will share those results with you at the time of your assessment. If soil around your property has not been sampled, LEAP staff can help you to arrange it.

- **Water.** Lead is commonly used in household plumbing materials and water service lines. But lead in drinking water can also cause a variety of health problems. In babies and children, exposure to lead in drinking water above a specified level can result in delays in physical and mental development, along with slight deficits in attention span and learning abilities. In adults, it can cause increases in blood pressure. Adults who drink this water over many years could develop kidney problems or high blood pressure.

The mission of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis and Clark County residents.

Lead usually enters tap water through corrosion of plumbing materials. Homes built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures, and solder. However, new homes are also at risk: even “lead-free” plumbing may contain up to 8 percent lead. The most common problem is with brass or chrome-plated brass faucets and fixtures, which can leach significant amounts of lead into the water, especially hot water. LEAP staff has you fill a liter test bottle with the first water draw of the day, because we want to capture the water that has been sitting in the pipes all night for possible lead leaching. The sample is sent to a laboratory for analysis and you will get a written report of the results.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to stop by the LEAP office at City Hall in East Helena, (306 E. Main) or give Debb or Jan a call at 457-8583.

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