

Managing possible lead dust in and around the home

Lead dust is the greatest source of non-occupational exposure to lead. It can settle on the ground and on surfaces in and around your home. To minimise the amount of lead dust in your home and to prevent your exposure to lead, there are some simple steps that you should follow.

The Department of Health recommends that you follow these procedures until the Esperance community is advised that there is no further risk of lead dust entering your home.

Keeping dust out of your home

- ✓ Wipe soil off shoes, or remove shoes before entering the house
- ✓ Place clean door mats at every door into your home
- ✓ Regularly wet wash pets particularly after they have been outside
- ✓ Wet wash children's toys regularly and after they have been used outside
- ✓ Close all doors and windows when you leave the house or on windy days to prevent dust from entering your home

Removing lead dust from your home

Hard surfaces

It is important to wet clean all hard surfaces in your home. Wet cleaning is the most effective way of removing lead dust. The use of high phosphate detergents or all purpose detergents may help.

Start at the highest point in the room and work your way down so that you clean the floor last. Replace sponges, cloths and mop heads regularly to prevent spreading lead around your home.

When wet cleaning, apply the water or cleaning solution by pouring or spraying so as to prevent contaminating the cleaning fluid.

Wet wipe all hard furniture, including table tops and chairs, coffee tables, book shelves, windows, sills, doors and handles and any other accessible horizontal surfaces. Wet wipe kitchen bench tops daily and before preparing each meal.

Do not use a dry cloth or feather duster to clean surfaces.

Hard surfaces should be cleaned at least once per week.

Hard floors

Vacuum and then wet mop all hard floors in your house. When wet mopping, change the mopping water at least once per room. When complete, rinse all floors with clean water using a clean mop head.

Never use a broom or dust pan to remove dirt or dust from your floor.

Where possible, use a high-efficiency particulate air vacuum (HEPA vacuum) to give the house a thorough clean at least once. If you do not own one, the Department of Health has purchased a number of these vacuum cleaners and they are available for loan free of charge to residents of the Town of Esperance for a 24 hour period at a time.

Where from: Arnold Autos/Coates Hire, 65 Norseman Rd, Esperance
Telephone: 9071 5000 (ring to book the vacuum)

How long for: 24 hours per client

Bond: \$50.00 (\$20.00 for pensioners/concession card holders) – the machine must be returned on time and with the filter cleaned for the bond to be fully refunded. This is to ensure the machines are available for other residents to use.

A thorough cleaning at least once with the HEPA vacuum, followed by weekly vacuuming and wet mopping until the community is advised there is no further risk of lead dust entering your home is recommended.

Carpets and soft furnishings

Carpets and soft furnishings can be very difficult to clean as they can trap dust.

Where possible, use a HEPA vacuum to vacuum lounge chairs and carpets. Steam cleaning can also be useful in removing lead dust from carpets.

A thorough cleaning at least once with the HEPA vacuum, followed by weekly vacuuming of carpets, is recommended until the community is advised there is no further risk of lead dust entering your home.

Wash bed linen and blankets regularly to remove any dust that may have settled on them.

Wash curtains and wet wipe Venetian or vertical blinds to remove accumulated dust. Washing curtains is difficult to do regularly so it is suggested that you inspect curtains once per month for dust. If dusty, these should be cleaned.

Rainwater

The Department of Health recommends that you do not drink rainwater unless you have had it tested to make sure that it meets the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for lead. Testing in Esperance has shown that a large proportion of rainwater tested does not meet the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for lead.

If you wish to have your rainwater tested, contact the Shire of Esperance on 9071 0666 to make the necessary arrangements.

Soil

If you grow your own fruit and vegetables, wash all fruit and vegetables using scheme water (not rainwater) then dry using a clean kitchen towel or paper towel before eating and/or cooking. This will remove any dust that may be present on the surface of the produce.

Outdoor activities

If you eat outdoors at home or at picnic facilities, basic hygiene practices are adequate to prevent your exposure to dust.

Wet wipe all outdoor tables and chairs before use, replacing the water regularly as you clean, then dry using a clean dry cloth.

Wet wash outdoor decking or paved areas regularly and before use, particularly where small children may have access. Toddlers at the crawling stage can be at risk of exposure to lead dust on the ground.

When eating outdoors, always place food on a clean plate or a napkin. Never place food directly on to outdoor tables or surfaces. Always wash and dry your hands after engaging in outdoor activities, and always before eating outdoors.

Handwashing

Handwashing is the most effective way of preventing your exposure to lead dust. Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water after taking part in outdoor activities and after touching surfaces that are dusty and always before eating. Also check your fingernails for dust and dirt and use a scrubbing brush if necessary.

Make sure that you dry your hands thoroughly using a clean dry towel.

Wet or damp hands are more likely to collect dust than dry hands.

Diet and nutrition

Nutrition plays an important role in your blood lead level as well as in your general health. Lead absorption occurs more readily if you skip meals or if your stomach is empty.

It is recommended that children in particular, eat small meals often throughout the day.

It is important to eat foods which are:

- ✓ High in fibre – wholegrain breads and cereals, fresh fruit and vegetables
- ✓ High in calcium – milk, yoghurt, cheese, custard
- ✓ High in iron – lean red meat, chicken, fish, nuts, eggs

Fibre helps to reduce lead absorption and increase lead excretion from the body.

Iron helps red blood cells in the body to carry oxygen. Lead can interfere with this. Eating foods high in iron is important for maintaining good health.

Calcium is important for your child's bones. If your child is not getting enough calcium, the body can confuse lead for calcium and absorb lead into the bones. Eating foods high in calcium will help ensure that lead is not stored in the bones.

During pregnancy, a woman's calcium requirements increase and if the dietary intake is inadequate, calcium can be released from the bones. Where lead is stored in the bones, this may also be released into the woman's blood stream and can cross the placenta to the unborn child.

To prevent release of previously stored lead from your bones, it is particularly important for pregnant women to increase their calcium intake for the duration of the pregnancy. Consult your General Practitioner for advice on increasing your calcium intake.

Eating a diet low in fatty processed foods is important for maintaining good health and also helps reduce lead absorption. Fatty processed foods including fast foods, takeaways, cakes, biscuits, chocolates and deep fried foods can increase the risk of lead absorption by the body.