



Speaking for Children

What's best for our youngest children is best for everyone!

Keeping Children Safe from Poison

Each year, about 91,000 children suffer from accidental poisoning. While the majority of these poisonings are not fatal, they are all avoidable. In observance of National Poison Prevention Week (March 15-19), First 5 Sonoma County offers these simple steps for parents to safeguard their children by assuring that each room in their home is free from poison hazards. When checking your home, also remember to get down to your child's height and evaluate potential hazards from his or her perspective.

- **Kitchen/Laundry Room.** Keep household cleaners like dishwasher soap, detergent, and oven cleaners in a cabinet with child-proof locks.
- **Bathroom.** Cabinets may contain medication, vitamins, rubbing alcohol, and other products that can be dangerous to children. Put these in a medicine cabinet out of reach or lock them in a cabinet. Properly dispose of expired medicines.
- **Bedrooms.** Clear nightstands of medications or creams. Be careful where you leave your purse, since its contents—including cosmetics, lotions, medications, and cigarettes—can be harmful to children if eaten. Take care when purchasing toys as some may contain lead.
- **Yard.** Some plants can be poisonous, so teach your child not to put plants in his or her mouth. All garden fertilizers and pesticides should be placed out of reach or in a locked cabinet.

- **Paint.** Some older houses and furniture have lead-based paint. Children may breathe paint dust or swallow flakes. Test your home for lead to ensure your child is safe.
- **Throughout the house.** Carbon monoxide is emitted from cars, gas ovens and space heaters. Consider installing a low-cost carbon monoxide detector that signals high levels.

Resources to Help Safeguard Your Home

California Poison Action Line. If a child is not breathing after ingesting poison, call 911. If the child is alert, call the California Poison Action Line at 1-800-222-1222. Be ready to provide information, including the name of the product and time of poisoning.

Kit for New Parents. This free resource contains a DVD, books with useful parenting information, and gifts for your young child. The *Kit* also includes the California Poison Action hotline telephone number on a magnet. To get your *Kit*, call First 5 Sonoma County at 707-565-6680.

Environmental Protection Agency. To learn how to test your home for lead, call 1-800-424-LEAD or visit www.epa.gov/lead.

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Visit www.cpsc.gov to get a list of toys that have been recalled due to lead and other hazards.

First 5 Spotlight on Lead Poisoning

Lead is harmful to children, because if they get enough of it in their bodies, it can limit their physical development. Lead poisoning is the most common environmental problem in California. Children under the age of five are most at-risk for lead exposure and poisoning for three reasons:

- Babies and young children often put their hands and other objects in their mouths. Some objects have lead dust on them.
- Children's growing bodies absorb more lead.
- Children's brains and nervous systems are more sensitive to the damaging effects of lead.

Lead comes in many forms—in the paint of older homes, glazes for pottery, some plastics, and some home remedies, for example. The most common source of lead poisoning in young children is the lead found in household dust when old paint is in poor condition or disturbed during home renovation projects. Also, in recent years, toys from well-known brands have been recalled for unsafe levels of lead.

Lead may be found in products containing vinyl, plastic or metal.

Examples include: some soft plastic items, vinyl lunch boxes, metal charms, hard plastic toys, children's jewelry, and products purchased from vending machines.

Examine toys for signs of wear, especially if your child is mouthing, biting, or chewing toys.

Signs of wear include sun damage, fading, bite marks, chips or breaks in the painted surface.

Check the recall list before buying any toys.

Recalled toys should be returned to the manufacturer or store where purchased. Visit the Consumer Protection website at <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prereel/category/toy.html>.

Know the uses and limitations of home lead testing kits.

While lead testing kits are available at most hardware stores, keep in mind that positive test results are most likely accurate but negative results for toys may be unreliable. Most kits only test what is on the surface and may not indicate lead even if it is present beneath the surface. Remove any toys that test positive.



Wash toys regularly to clean off household dust.

Toys may pick up lead dust in older homes from deteriorating paint and soil.

A blood test is the only way to know whether your child has been exposed to lead. Ask your doctor for a simple blood test for lead or contact Sonoma County Department of Health Services for assistance. Visit <http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/ph/lead/index.htm> or phone 707/565-4400.

Adopted from Get the LEAD Out, A Bay Area Coalition of Lead Poisoning Prevention Leaders: www.stoppinglead.org.

About First 5 Sonoma County

Our children's early experiences last a lifetime and shape our community's future. Understanding the critical importance of investing in early childhood development, California voters passed Proposition 10, a 50 cent-per-pack tax on tobacco products, in 1998 and upheld its importance again in an election in 2000. Proposition 10 provides the only dedicated source of local funding for children ages 0-5 and their families. Last year, **First 5 Sonoma County** invested nearly \$4.5 million in services to approximately 20,000 children, parents, and teachers. **First 5 Sonoma County** is the organization responsible for distributing Proposition 10 funds in Sonoma County to give young children the best start in school and in life. For more information on **First 5 Sonoma County** and its programs, please call 565-6626 or visit www.first5sonomacounty.org