

Fact Sheet

Managing lead-based paint

If your property was built before 1980, it is likely to contain lead-based paint. Lead in paint is toxic and can be harmful to your health, particularly for those who are pregnant, young children and pets.

Lead-based paint only becomes a health risk when it deteriorates, becomes damaged or disturbed, and lead particles are swallowed or inhaled. There are three options for managing lead-based paint depending on its condition. Assessing what condition the paint is in is the first step to keeping you, your family and vulnerable people safe from lead hazards.

Lead-based paint in good condition

Leave in place and monitor

Lead-based paint that is not deteriorating e.g., flaking, cracking, chipping, chalking or peeling is a low lead exposure risk. The paint can be left in place but must be monitored at least once every two years or annually for high impact areas such as window frames, door frames and skirting boards.

Lead-based paint with minor deterioration

Stabilise

Small painted areas with minor deterioration can be stabilised by sealing with a modern paint topcoat or an encapsulant. Small areas include 0.2 square metres (m²) in an interior room, less than 2m² on outdoor surfaces or 10% of the total surface area for items such as windowsills. Qualified painting contractors can inspect surfaces with lead-based paint and advise you on whether stabilisation will be effective. Stabilised areas must be monitored at least once every two years, or annually for high impact areas such as window frames, door frames and skirting boards, to check the stabilising layer stays intact. Viable

Sealing with a modern topcoat paint

Topcoat paints used for sealing should be compatible with the underlying existing paint. Paint currently being sold in Australia is only permitted to contain very small trace amounts of lead, so most modern oil-based or latex paints can be used.

Using an encapsulant

Encapsulants are specialised chemical coatings that can be used to create a longer-lasting barrier over lead-based paint than sealing with modern topcoat paint. Encapsulants are not readily available to the public as they require training and experience to apply. Qualified painting contractors can advise if the area is suitable for an encapsulant and assist with the application. Encapsulants are not recommended for use on high impact areas such as window frames, door frames, skirting boards and stairs.

Lead-based paint with major deterioration

Remove or enclose

Removal of lead-based paint or permanent/semi-permanent enclosure of the painted surface is recommended for larger areas, or areas with major deterioration, where stabilization isn't possible. Consult a qualified painting contractor if unsure whether the level of deterioration in your situation is minor or major. They should be able to guide you as to whether stabilisation will work for your situation or if removal of lead-based paint is required.



Removing paint

Using a qualified painting contractor to remove lead-based paint is strongly recommended. Removal can create more lead paint dust than stabilisation if not done carefully. This toxic dust can move throughout the property and into nearby properties. Use methods which minimize lead paint dust such as wet scraping and wet sanding, on and off-site chemical stripping, or completely replacing the item (e.g., doors, windowsills, skirtings).

Enclosing a painted surface

Some painted areas such as walls and ceilings can be enclosed with a durable, non-toxic, and dust-tight material, such as gypsum board overlays as an alternative to lead-based paint removal. To protect future owners or renovators, a label warning of the presence of lead-based paint should be fixed to the surface before enclosing.

Preparation

When preparing small areas for **stabilisation**:

- > cover or remove all items in the area and protect the floor with plastic sheeting
- > wear personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks and work clothes
- > remove any loose lead-based paint flakes by low dust generation methods e.g., wet sanding
- > remove surface grease, grime and dirt with a phosphate-based detergent.

When preparing areas for **lead-based paint removal**, extra precautions are needed in addition to the preparation steps for stabilisation:

- > seal off the area
- > cover carpets (plastic sheeting) because it is difficult to clean carpets if they become contaminated with lead paint dust during the removal process
- > relocate children, pregnant people, and pets out of the house during the work and clean up.

Cleaning up lead paint dust

After removal of lead-based paint, thoroughly clean-up the work and surrounding areas by:

- > vacuuming all surfaces with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter vacuum
- > wet mopping the floors using the three bucket method and damp wiping surfaces with sugar soap solution (refresh solution frequently)
- > vacuuming all surfaces after floor mopping until no dust is visible.

Testing surface dust and soil in the work and surrounding areas after clean-up is complete can help to ensure there is no further risk of lead exposure.

Further information

For more information, resources, and a list of qualified painting contractors, visit www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/leadpaintaware.

For more information

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This document has been reviewed and endorsed by CAG* for consumers and the community – October 2023

*SA Health Community Advisory Group



www.ausgoal.gov.au/creative-commons



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