Cleaning Up Take-Home Lead Dust in your Home and Car

The most effective method for removing lead dust combines vacuuming and wet wiping. Follow the instructions below, first HEPA vacuum then wet clean surfaces.

Using a HEPA vacuum

Clean all horizontal surfaces with a HEPA vacuum. These are equipped with a High Efficiency Particulate Air Filter. Be sure to wet clean dust traps such as windows, radiators, air vents/registers and ceiling fans. Do NOT open or change the vacuum filters and bags inside the home.

Cleaning up lead from carpets

• Only use a vacuum with a HEPA filter and a beater bar. Not all vacuums will clean up lead dust.
• Do NOT use bag-less vacuums, canister vacuums without bags or filters, or car wash vacuums.
• Vacuum the room in one direction, and then repeat in the other direction.
• Vacuum slowly.
• Put used vacuum bag or filter in outside trash when finished.
• Area rugs can be cleaned with same methods or machine washed separately. Clean both sides and under rugs.

Cleaning up lead from clothes and other soft items

• Curtains, clothing, bedding, and cushion covers exposed to lead, should be machine washed separately from items that were NOT exposed to lead.
• Use standard all-purpose detergent.
• Add extra rinse cycle before drying.
• Heavily contaminated furniture or mattresses should be thrown away.

Lead cleaning guidelines

• Pregnant women and children should NOT clean up lead dust.
• Remove children and pets from area while cleaning.
• Clean the highest surface first and work down. Work from cleanest areas to dirty. Clean floors last.
• Wear protection, such as gloves and a mask.

Cleaning up lead from hard surfaces

• Use a HEPA vacuum on all surfaces.
• Then wet clean all hard surfaces.
• Use all-purpose cleaning detergent.
• Avoid using bleach. NEVER mix cleaners.
• See other side of this fact sheet for details on cleaning up lead from hard surfaces.

Cleaning up lead checklist

☐ Floors/walls         ☐ Handles/knobs        ☐ Rugs                  ☐ Car mats/rugs*
☐ Shelves            ☐ HVAC vents            ☐ Couches/chairs        ☐ Child car seat
☐ Counter tops       ☐ Dishes               ☐ Beds                  ☐ Car dashboard/doors
☐ Tables            ☐ Toys (hard and soft)   ☐ Curtains              ☐ Car steering wheel
☐ Window sills       ☐ Doormats             ☐ Clothing              ☐ Pets

*Consider replacing car rugs with plastic mats for easier cleaning.
Cleaning up lead from small surfaces (window sills, counter tops, shelves)

- Use disposable papers towels, if possible.
- Use the method of clean, dispose, rinse, dispose.
- Change out water when it appears dirty.
- Flush dirty water down the toilet, NOT outside.
- Put used towels in outside trash when finished cleaning each room.
- Use all-purpose cleaning detergent.
- Avoid using bleach. NEVER mix cleansers.

Cleaning up lead from large surfaces (uncarpeted floors)

- Prepare 3 buckets and a mop.
- Add detergent to water in bucket 1 and use to mop surfaces.
- Wring out dirty water from mop in bucket 2.
- Fill bucket 3 with clean, warm rinse water. When dirty, replace with clean warm water.
- Again, wring out dirty water from mop in bucket 2.
- When practical, start with cleanest areas and work to dirtiest areas.
- Dispose of mop head in outside trash can.
- Flush dirty water down toilet, NOT outside.

For more information

- Contact your doctor or local health department to have your family tested for lead in their blood.
- Contact Durham County Environmental Health at 919-560-7800.
- Contact NC Environmental Health at 919-707-5950.

Other considerations

- For cleaner carpets consider steam cleaning after vacuuming.
- Clean surfaces regularly to prevent dust build-up.
- Heavily contaminated homes and cars may need professional lead removal cleaning.

For additional information about lead, visit:
NCHealthyHomes.com
ReinvestmentPartners.org

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