

Foods Can Help Protect Your Child From Lead Poisoning

If your children have been exposed to lead, you can protect them by making sure they eat well. Eating good foods will help their bodies fight lead poisoning. Children get lead poisoning because they accidentally swallow small amounts of lead or lead dust. Lead may be in the paint, dust, or soil in and around the home, or in drinking water or food. Children may take in dangerous amounts of lead because they often put their hands and other things in their mouths. Lead can damage the brain and other organs in young children.

Serve your child at least three meals a day

Children have higher risk of lead poisoning when: they have poor appetites; they have poor nutrition; they do not eat regularly. Poor nutrition and an empty stomach make the body absorb more lead. Feed your child well-balanced meals. If your child does not eat much at a time, let him or her eat smaller meals more often.

Serve your child healthy snacks

Healthy snacks help children with small appetites get enough food. It is hard for children with small appetites to get enough food.

Foods with Calcium and Iron Protect the Body Against Lead

Food with iron will help protect your child from lead poisoning by helping stop the lead from being absorbed into the body. Vitamin C is important because it helps the body absorb more iron.

Iron Sources

Beef
Liver
Kidney
Turkey
Oyster
Sardines
Game meat (deer)
Lamb
Greens
Spinach
Soybeans
Dried beans
Dried peas

Lentils
Tofu
Dried Prunes
Prune juice
Dried apricots
Dried peaches
Dried pears
Molasses
Wheat germ
Enriched bread
Iron-fortified cereal
Whole wheat bread

Vitamin C Sources

Oranges
Orange juice
Grapefruit
Grapefruit juice
Strawberries
Cantaloupe
Honeydew
Tangerine

Tomatoes
Potatoes
Broccoli
Cabbage
Cauliflower
Red/Green peppers
Chili peppers
Summer squash

The calcium in milk and other dairy foods also helps prevent lead from being absorbed into the body. Children need 2 to 3 servings of milk or other dairy foods a day. More servings are not necessary. Children who drink too much milk are often not interested in eating other healthy foods.

Calcium Sources

Milk
Yogurt
Cheese
Milk-based soup

Pudding made with milk
Canned Salmon with bones
Canned Sardines with bones
Tofu

Healthy Snacks These snack ideas can help your children get the nutrients they need:

Cheese cubes
Saltine crackers with cheese
Melon cubes
Yogurt
Broccoli
Orange sections
Cereal with milk and wheat germ
Vegetables with yogurt dip or cheese
Potatoes with cheese and vegetables
Milkshake with molasses
Pancakes with molasses
Ice cream topped with wheat germ

Non-food Protection

- Always wash your children's hands before they eat to wash off any lead dust.
- Keep areas clean where your child lives, plays, eats and sleeps. Keep your children from putting things that may contain lead in their mouths.
- Wash all toys, pacifiers, and other things that your children may be tempted to put in their mouths.
- Throw away food that has fallen on the floor or ground. Water from faucets may have lead in it.
- Let your water run for at least 30 seconds before you use it for drinking or cooking.
- Do not use hot tap water for cooking or drinking.
- Some imported pottery, china, crystal and handmade ceramics have lead. Use only lead-safe utensils for cooking or storing food and drink.
- Do not give your children lead-containing folk medicine powders, such as greta and azarcon.
- Ask your child's doctor for a blood lead test.