



October 23, 2008

## Lead hazards found in homes in good repair

*Vicki Hartman*  
*Guest essayist*

Oct. 19-25 is National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week. As the parent of a child affected by lead poisoning, I want to address some unfortunate misconceptions. Some people think parents of lead-poisoned children are not vigilant in the care of their children. If only it were that simple.

I think one of the reasons parents don't insist on getting children tested for lead exposure is they believe that because their home is clean and there is no peeling paint, there is no risk of exposure to lead. We were among that group. We were diligently focused on our son's health. We read numerous parenting books, swept and vacuumed regularly, and ate whole foods. We even replaced old windows to avoid lead poisoning. So we were shocked and felt quite helpless when our son finally did get tested — at almost 2 years old — with high results. Our pediatrician had not required a test when our son was 1 and we did not know enough to request the test.

The truth is that any house built in the United States before 1978 probably has lead paint in it and paint chips are not the only lead hazard. Most children are poisoned by microscopic dust particles produced when someone opens a door or window and the friction releases dust. Over time, this dust can permanently damage a child's brain.

In New York, regardless of presumed risk, it is the law that every child be tested for exposure to lead at age 1 and *again* at 2, but the number of children being tested after age 1 declines dramatically. All parents want to keep their children safe. Please, make sure your home is tested and made safe from lead, and that your child is tested for lead exposure at ages 1 and 2. For information about free lead tests and other resources call the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning at (585) 256-2267.

*Hartman, of Rochester, is a board member, Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning.*

---