Lead poisoning is a serious problem in young children. Children are poisoned when they eat or breathe lead. Lead can be found in paint, dust, water, dirt and air. Children who have high levels of lead in their bodies may not act sick. Signs and symptoms of lead poisoning may include:

- Tiredness
- Convulsions
- Vomiting or stomach ache
- Loss of appetite
- Anemia
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Headaches
- Achy joints
- Behavior changes or irritability

Blood tests are the best way to tell if children have too much lead in their bodies. If your child is younger than six years old, ask the doctor if he needs his lead level checked yearly at the routine checkup. A blood lead level of concern is less than 10 mcg/dl (micrograms per deciliter) or greater. The national average is about 2 mcg/dl.

**Treatment for high lead levels:**

1. If your child’s level is elevated, the health department may be asked to visit your home. They will help you find the sources of lead in your house and yard and suggest ways to get rid of them.
2. Children with levels that are very high will need medicine to get the lead out of their bodies. They may take medicine by mouth or come to the hospital for treatment.
3. The doctor will tell you when your child’s blood lead level needs to be checked again.

**Home care:**

1. ALWAYS wash your child’s face and hands before he eats and sleeps. Wash pacifiers and toys often.
2. Make sure your child gets food rich in iron and calcium. Fatty foods cause your child’s body to soak up more lead. Your child’s doctor can give you a list of foods that are good for your child to eat.
3. Run tap water for a minute or so before drinking it first thing in the morning. If you need hot water for cooking, use cold tap water and boil it.
5. If you have bare floors, damp mop them at least once a week. You also can damp wipe windowsills and other flat surfaces with clean water.
6. Dirt in potted plants and newspaper print may contain a lot of lead. Don’t let children eat or chew on these things.
7. Make sure your child washes his hands well when he’s been near places that have a lot of lead. This includes:
   - Houses built before 1978
   - Houses located near major highways
   - Sandboxes and dirt lots

**If you have questions, please call your child’s doctor or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188.**