



Gardening in Lead-Contaminated Soil

If you eat vegetables grown in soil that contain lead, lead can get into the vegetables you eat, and possibly cause health problems for you and your family. Here are some simple things you can do to lower your family's lead exposure when you eat vegetables grown in your garden:

Clean vegetables well before cooking or eating.

- Throw away old and outer leaves of vegetables.
- Wash all vegetables with cold water. Scrub vegetables with a brush to help remove dirt. Rinse vegetables well before eating.
- Scrub and peel root crops such as carrots, potatoes, turnips, and onions before eating them.



Avoid planting root crops in contaminated soils or grow vegetables in raised beds.

- Grow crops such as tomatoes, peppers, squash, cucumbers, peas, beans, or corn. They are less likely to absorb lead.
- Grow leafy vegetables such as lettuce and root crops (carrots, potatoes) in containers or raised beds filled with clean soil. You can purchase clean soil from nurseries or garden stores.

Do...

- Add peat moss, compost, or manure to your soil. These bind the lead in soil so that vegetables absorb less lead.
- Keep soil pH at 6.5 or higher so that plants will absorb less lead.
- Cover all bare soil in the garden with 2 to 4 inches of clean mulch such as wood chips, grass clippings, clean soil, or compost.
- Wash your hands, clothes and shoes after gardening to avoid tracking soil and dust into your home.
- Make sure children who are helping in the garden or playing in contaminated soil also follow these guidelines.

Do not...

- Grow vegetables in the drip zone and around the foundation of older buildings.
- Eat food, chew gum, or smoke when working in the yard. Touching soil and then putting things you touched in your mouth can increase your exposure to lead.



If you are concerned, get your child tested for lead!

- *Most lead poisoned children do not act or look sick.*
- *The only way to know if your child has lead poisoning is to have a blood test.*
- *Children 6 years and younger are more likely to have lead poisoning.*
- *For more information on lead poisoning prevention, please contact the Illinois Department of Public Health at 217-782-3517, 866-909-3572 or TTY (hearing impaired use only) 800-547-0466; or you can call the Marion County Health Department at 548-3878 or 532-6518.*

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Questions?

If you have questions about gardening in soil that contains lead, call the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

ATSDR, Region 5 (Chicago):

Michelle Colledge
Environmental Health Scientist
(312) 886-1462
mcolledge@cdc.gov

If you have questions about the Sandoval Lead Superfund site, call the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S.EPA).

USEPA, Region 5:

Heriberto León
Community Involvement Coordinator
312-886-6163
leon.heriberto@epa.gov

Michael Berkoff
Remedial Project Manager
312-353-8983
berkoff.michael@epa.gov

You can call EPA toll-free weekdays at 800-621-8431, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.



Useful Websites:

NCEH/ATSDR:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/>

USEPA:

<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sandoval-zinc>

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH:

<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/>



ATSDR is a public health agency and developed this flier.