



# Gardening in Lead-Contaminated Soil

Fall, 2007

If you eat vegetables grown in soil that contain lead, lead can get into your body. This may cause health problems. To lower the amount of lead that gets into your body when you eat vegetables grown in your garden, follow these simple steps:

**✓ 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 or containers.**

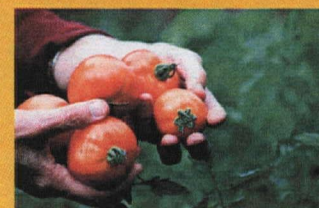
- Grow crops such as tomatoes, peppers, squash, cucumbers, peas, beans, or corn. They are less likely to absorb lead.
- Grow leafy vegetables such as lettuce and root crops (carrots, potatoes) in containers or raised beds filled with lead-free soil. You can purchase leadfree soil from nurseries or garden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

**✗ Do not...**

- grow vegetables in the drip zone and around the foundation of older buildings.
- grow root crops and low-growing leafy vegetables in soil that contains more than 1,000 parts per million of lead.
- garden in soil that contains more than 1,500 parts per million of lead.



## Questions about gardening in soil that has lead?

If you have questions call your local health department or the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). The ATSDR phone number is (913) 551-1314.

ATSDR is a public health agency located in Atlanta, Georgia and developed this flier.

**ATSDR**  
AGENCY FOR TOXIC SUBSTANCES  
AND DISEASE REGISTRY



## Get your child tested for lead poisoning today!

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 lead test. Children 6 years and younger are more likely to have lead poisoning. Call your doctor or clinic today to get your child tested.