

# Dirt alert!

The soil you come into contact with every day may contain heavy metals, such as lead, arsenic, and mercury, that can get into your body by accidentally eating or breathing in dirt and dust particles. Luckily, you can take simple actions to protect yourself and your family.

## HEALTHY HOME BEST PRACTICES

### Regularly wash with soap and water



➤ Hands, especially for children after playing and before eating (*make it a washing game or contest*).

- Toys, bottles, and pacifiers.
- Fruits and vegetables.
- Garden tools.
- Floors (use a mop).
- Surfaces and windowsills.



### Keep dirt outside

- Remove and clean shoes before you come in to avoid tracking dirt through the house.
- Use doormats to clean shoes before going inside.
- Leave gardening tools outside.

### Create safe places to play

- Don't allow kids to play in bare soil along the sides of buildings or under porches.
- Keep play areas away from old buildings, roads, and suspected mine waste.
- Make sure sandboxes are clean and filled with new sand before using.



### Garden safely

- Use raised garden beds with store-bought soil.
- Don't garden next to buildings or roads.
- Remember to wear gloves.



### Eat healthy

- Eat a variety of foods rich in iron, calcium, and vitamins A, B, C, and E to reduce the effects of lead and arsenic.

### Maintain your home

If you have a home built before 1979, you may have lead-based paint.

- Keep the paint in your home in good condition to reduce peeling, chipping, or flaking paint.
- Do not remove the paint yourself.
- Hire EPA lead-safe certified contractors.
- Replace air filters regularly.



## WHY HEAVY METALS MIGHT BE IN THE SOIL

Heavy metals are found naturally in some soil. Other sources include industrial and mining sites. Soil near roads may contaminate the soil as well. Older homes may have lead paint and arsenic-treated wood, and newer industrial sites might have arsenic-treated wood. The materials can peel, chip, and splinter, and end up in the soil.

### More information

Arsenic: [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=19&tid=3](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=19&tid=3)

Lead: [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/TF.asp?id=93&tid=22](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/TF.asp?id=93&tid=22)



**COLORADO**  
Department of Public  
Health & Environment  
SEPTEMBER 2019