

Lead Smart Guidelines for Educational, Child Care and Day Care Providers

These guidelines have been developed to assist service providers in Port Pirie, operating in facilities where babies, infants, toddlers and children spend significant time. They support a best practice approach toward achieving the Environmental Health Centre's aim of reducing children's blood lead levels to as low as possible.

The guideline will assist providers to also meet the National Quality Framework, Quality Area, Standards and Elements requirements and as such, should be implemented into all relevant policies and procedures. In particular, quality areas such as Children's Health and Safety, Physical Environment, Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities and Leadership and Service Management.

Educational, child care and family day care providers can minimise the risk of exposure to lead by achieving acceptable standards that protect children, employees, contractors, volunteers and families who utilise these services.

Those at most risk from lead are children under five years of age and unborn babies for the following reasons:

- > The brain, nervous system and body are still developing and are highly vulnerable to environmental toxins such as lead;
- > Normal hand-to-mouth activity in young children exposes them to high risks of ingesting lead in contaminated environments;
- > Children absorb a much higher proportion of lead than juveniles or adults—up to 50% compared to 10% in adults (NSW EPA, 2006).

Health, welfare and safety

Generally, activities related to child care employment in Port Pirie are not considered to be 'lead risk' jobs because there is a relatively low risk of lead exposure. However, it is necessary to take precautions to keep this exposure risk low for staff, including contractors and volunteers.

Training

- > Providers of child care, employees, contractors and volunteers should be provided with information and training relating to the Lead Smart Guidelines for Educational, Child Care and Day Care Providers.
- > In particular:
 - o at the time of induction/orientation of new employees, contractors and volunteers;
 - o when preparing play environments, experiences and meals for children, and;
 - o when conducting cleaning or maintenance of the building and/or grounds.
- > Providers may consider using the guidelines to develop policies and checklists related to lead. Please contact the Environmental Health Centre for further information.



Personal Protective Equipment

- > When carrying out any activity that could raise dust and potentially expose workers to lead, staff should be provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, appropriate coveralls/overalls (either disposable or washed separately) and dust masks i.e. when using an outdoor vacuum cleaner or high pressure hose.
- > Hands and any exposed area of the body should be thoroughly cleaned after cleaning or clearing areas that has caused dust to be disturbed.

Everyday Lead Smart Practices and Routines

Hand Hygiene

- > **Hand washing and drying** makes a significant difference to a child's intake of lead-contaminated dust. It is recommended that staff and children wash hands with soap and dry their hands well, on entering and before leaving the building, after outside play times, before and after every meal or snack.
- > Wet sticky hands will **pick up more dirt and dust** than grubby dry hands.
- > **Fingernails** should be kept short and clean.

Food and drinks

- > **Before preparing food and drinks** for children, kitchen surfaces should be **damp wiped** and all utensils cleaned. After use, utensils and dishes should be dried and put away, rather than leaving on a rack to dry.
- > Children should be offered **regular meals and snacks** throughout the day (every 2 – 3 hours) to allow them to eat and re-energise in accordance with their appetite. These should be time limited (e.g. no longer than 30min). Children absorb less lead with healthy foods in their stomach. Their diet should be healthy and balanced with adequate age-appropriate quantities of calcium, vitamin C, fibre and iron. High fat foods should be avoided.
- > Ensure all meals and snacks are eaten in a **highchair or at a table**. If eating outdoors (e.g. during special events such as picnics), a barrier blanket or picnic rug should be placed on the ground before children sit down to eat. Ensure blankets/rugs are placed down just prior to being used, avoiding the tracking of dirt, dust and sand where children will be eating. Blankets and rugs should be washed before storing or using again. If possible avoid eating outdoors on extremely windy days.
- > **Wash all fruit and vegetables thoroughly**. Leave skin on fruit and vegetables where age appropriate. Note that food grown or produced in Port Pirie may contain lead - pregnant women and young children should avoid eating home-grown/locally-grown produce, including eggs, from Port Pirie.
- > **Dropped food** must be thrown away and dropped drink bottles must be rinsed.
- > **Dropped cutlery** should either be replaced or rinsed as appropriate.
- > **Rain water is not to be used** for preparation of food or for drinking in Port Pirie — including making baby formula, cordials or sterilising baby bottles.
- > Children should be **discouraged from eating dirt**.

Babies

- > Ensure babies are **placed on a clean rug or blanket** when on floor or carpet surfaces. Make sure that the same surface of the blanket comes in contact with the floor at all times.
- > **Dummies** should be kept in a sealed container when not in use and washed every time they come into contact with the ground.

Sleep and rest times

- > Ensure cots, beds and rest areas are **not located under or adjacent to a window** to minimise potential exposure to lead-contaminated dust.
- > **Mattresses** should have sealed and washable covers.
- > Fresh bedding and linen should be **stored in a dust free, well-sealed cupboard**.
- > A **change of clothes or pyjamas** should be provided for sleep time or rest time because children should not be placed into cot or bed in the clothes they have been playing in.

Educational and recreational toys

- > Toys and educational equipment should be **stored in sealed containers or cupboards** away from dust after use.
- > Ensure **outside toys remain outside** and are wet-wiped before each use. Best practice is to use toys for outdoor OR indoor purposes—not both.
- > Ensure non-permanent outdoor toys are not left outside overnight.

Sandpits and mud play

- > **Sandpit covers** should be non-porous, water proof material (e.g. canvas) and should be secured on the pit at the end of each day; these can be topped up as required.
- > **Replace sand** in sandpits annually if no cover is used.
- > Ensure **sand and mud** from outside is **not used inside**.
- > **Ensure soil is not used from outside for mud play**.

Vegetable gardens

- > Ensure children are not consuming -produce grown in vegetable gardens that have been established within their educational setting (e.g. Kindergarten, Child Care, and Day Care) as food locally grown or produced in Port Pirie may contain lead.

Dust reduction

- > **Windows and doors should be kept shut on windy days** to minimise the entry of lead-contaminated dust from outside.
- > Minimise **dust-collecting clutter** on shelves.
- > If children's clothes need to be washed they can be placed on a **clothesline** to dry if it is not windy outside or an inside drying-rack or a dryer can be utilised.
- > Where possible, outdoor **shoes** should be removed, covered and/or cleaned prior to entering the building.
- > **Door mats** assist with reducing transfer of dirt inside and should be located at all external door entrances.

INDOOR CLEANING

- > **Mattresses** should be wiped over daily with a wet towel or cloth to remove dust and **cribs and cots** wiped over weekly at a minimum.
- > **Wet mop, damp dust and vacuum** rather than sweeping and using a dry duster.
- > **Wash bedding (pillows, sheets, and blankets) and clothing** provided by the facility between uses, or at a minimum of weekly.
- > **Wet clean the interior of the facility** on a weekly basis, in addition to daily cleaning requirements as per agency protocol or when visually soiled, remembering that dust accumulates in corners, on windowsills, behind furniture and behind doors.
- > **Wash soft toys and cloth books** on a weekly basis. Hard toys and educational equipment should be damp wiped after each use.

- > **Vacuum carpeted** areas daily using a vacuum cleaner that has HEPA filter to prevent the redistribution of dust particles. Do not vacuum while children are present. Allow 1 - 2 hours between vacuuming and cleaning of surfaces to allow dust to settle. Empty dust from the vacuum cleaner outside, into a plastic bag and place in an outside bin.
- > **Wet mop floor surfaces daily**
- > **Window wells and sliding door/window tracks** should be cleaned weekly at a minimum.
- > Carry out an **intensive de-dust** (including curtain washing, wall cleaning) and shampooing carpets and mats during holiday breaks when children are not present.
- > **Ceiling and portable fans and air conditioner filters** should be cleaned at a minimum of monthly and when visibly soiled.
- > **Select flooring and floor coverings** that are easy to clean and maintain.
- > **Vertical blinds** are preferred rather than horizontal Venetian/roman blinds due to ease of cleaning.
- > **Split air-conditioner systems** provide lower dust entry opportunities than other methods. Air coming in from the outside should be filtered through an easy-to-clean filtering system. Evaporative air cooling pads need to be wet before use to prevent lead-contaminated dust from being transferred inside. Clean or replace air conditioning system's filter/s regularly – this may be up to every month during the cooling season (seek manufacturer's advice on recommended filter cleaning intervals for dusty environments and the benefits of replaceable filters).

Outdoor Cleaning

- > **Permanent outdoor play equipment and furniture** (e.g. children's chairs) should be washed regularly (daily if possible) and when visibly dirty using a high pressure cleaner.
- > **Sweeping, dry dusting or using outdoor blower vacs** should not occur in outside areas because they redistribute lead-contaminated dust and encourage entry of dust indoors.
- > Ensure all **veranda porches, doorsteps, entryways, paths and driveways** are kept free from dust and debris. Hose down at a minimum of weekly and when visibly dirty.
- > Clean window and door screens and shade cloths/sails monthly, at a minimum.
- > Avoid **storage of children's personal belongings** outdoors. If this is necessary, the storage area should be sealed and kept free of dust. Any toys or equipment stored outside should be wet-wiped before use.
- > **Wash the exterior of the building** (i.e. walls and roof) monthly with a high pressure cleaner to reduce dust deposition.

Building and grounds maintenance

- > Maintain buildings in good repair to ensure that the **interior is well-sealed** around windows, doors, ceilings, floors, skirtings, cornices, architraves and wall linings to minimise dust entry from outside.
- > Clear and maintain grounds ensuring that **bare soil is covered** to provide a barrier between potentially lead-contaminated dirt and children e.g. mulch, bark chips, lawn, ground cover, plants, paving, gravel and concrete. Bark chips and mulch will need to be replenished annually to keep an adequate barrier in place. Maintain adequate barriers particularly in areas that get disturbed frequently such as under swings and near end of slides and slippery dips. **Roof eaves** should be covered or enclosed.

- > **Good drainage** should be provided to ensure that the pooling of potentially lead-contaminated water run-off from the building or play equipment is avoided. This is important where soft-fall material is used under play equipment and water pools after hosing down equipment.
- > **Pathways, driveways and outdoor play areas should be sealed** (i.e. porous cement should be painted or areas paved) to enable effective hosing.
- > **No lead-based products** (e.g. marine or old lead-based paint, car batteries etc.) should be utilised or stored at the facility or left within reach of a child.
 - o Ensure that any furniture (especially cots), purchased new or second-hand, are free from lead-based paint.
 - o Ensure that building and building products are free from lead (e.g. paint, roof flashing, pipes).

Repairs or renovations should not be carried out while children are present.

This includes replacement of flooring (such as carpet) and installation of equipment (such as air conditioners);

- o **Appropriate preparation and thorough clean up afterwards** is required before children re-enter the premises after these activities:
 - seal off the area from the rest of the facility by covering floors, doors and windows with plastic and tape;
 - packing up toys;
 - removing or covering soft furnishings, curtains, carpets and other household items;
 - use of a phosphate detergent such as liquid sugar soap and starting from the top and working to the bottom by damp dusting all surfaces, vacuuming carpets and hard floors, damp mopping floors and changing rinse water regularly.
- > The **Environmental Health Centre** can advise on appropriate practices and carpet replacement protocols.

Environmental Health Centre (EHC)

- > Provides service providers with information and education relating to lead exposure pathways and risk minimisation strategies.
- > Assists service providers to identify and develop lead exposure risk minimisation strategies. EHC will provide a report along with recommendations to assist service providers.
- > Assists service providers to develop Lead Smart policies, procedures and processes.
- > Assists services providers in planning and preparing for activities with potential to increase exposure to lead.

For more information

**Country Health SA Local Health Network
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