

# The War on Lead has been Won!

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Billions of dollars from property owners, businesses and tax payer funds have been wasted in the last two decades chasing a problem that simply does not exist. The scientific community needs to continually educate homeowners, landlords, tenants, our legislators and the Real- Estate Industry that the Lead issue is a country wide success story and not a toxic threat (lead poisoning of children has fallen dramatically in the last 25 years.)

Investigation of the literature on lead reveals the following:

1. Blood lead levels in children have fallen dramatically in the last 20 years with the lead level in gasoline as shown in the figure below<sup>1</sup>.

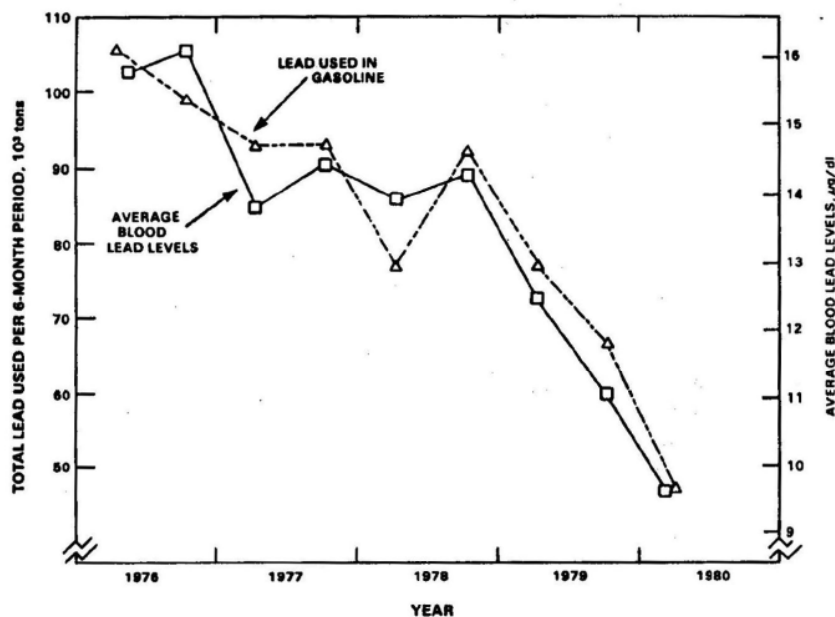


Figure VIII-1. Parallel decreases in blood lead values observed in the NHANES II Study and amounts of lead used in gasoline during 1976-1980.

Source: Annest et al. (1983).

2. The majority of lead in homes is tracked in from outside<sup>2</sup> and researchers comparing blood lead to levels in children before and after removing interior lead paint have found no reduction in interior lead levels<sup>3</sup> although the authors cling to the belief it is because they did not remove every square inch of paint. It should be noted that subsequent studies by the same authors where all the interior and exterior paint is removed and the occupants are requested to do extensive interior cleaning did significantly reduce interior lead levels. However, a thorough interior cleaning alone would almost certainly have produced the same result; a study

control the authors were not about to undertake with funding dollars at risk if they came up with the wrong answer. The notion that lead dust evolves from lead based paint buried below several layers of paint without lead is absurd. Even around sliding wood windows, the lead based paint that used to exist at wear locations has long since worn off and been replaced by paint without lead (based on tests conducted by the author).

3. The acceptable blood lead level set by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has been lowered 3 times in the last 20 years. At three times the current level of 10 µg/dl (10 millionth of a gram per one tenth of a liter), there is no evidence of detrimental effects on children despite the large number of studies specifically looking for problems caused by lead. The current level is based primarily on a study published in 1979 by Professor Herbert Needleman at the University of Pittsburgh. The CDC and EPA still site Dr, Needleman's work even after other researchers reported Professor Needleman to the Federal Office of Scientific Integrity for a host of problems with his research and a University of Pittsburgh Inquiry Panel reported: there were "*deliberate misrepresentation of the procedures actually used in the study*", "*Dr. Needleman was deliberately misleading in the published accounts of the procedures used in the study*", and his findings, "*certainly should not have been a basis for federal policy*".<sup>4</sup>." Apparently the CDC is not about to let the truth get in the way of a good self justifying health scare that has the potential to rival the asbestos panic.
4. Most of the significant sources of lead in the environment have already been removed. Removing lead from gasoline and the solder used to seal tin cans were the major contributors to the 70% drop in blood lead levels in people of all ages over the past twenty five years according to the CDC<sup>5,6</sup>. Today's children are exposed to 10 times less lead from the environment than those of us over 50 years old.

In summary, we should be declaring victory in the war on lead, not hysterically reducing our housing stock with money that could be used in other ways to actually help children. Scientists, engineers, property owners, businesses and the real-estate industry in general must band together and let politicians know that any new legislation must (1) acknowledge that lead poisoning is on the decline, (2) target resistant pockets of poisoning: inner city, low-to-moderate income properties occupied by young children, (3) allow voluntary compliance and testing using chemtest kits readily available today in any hardware store and (4) ban lead lawsuits against property owners based on "Junk-Science".

#### References:

1. "Decline in Blood Lead Levels in the US", Journal of the American Medical Association, JAMA, 7/27/94.
2. "Identification of Lead Sources", Archives of Environmental Health, 7/93.
3. "Blood Lead Levels in the US Population", Journal of the American Medical Association, JAMA, 7/27/94. "Lead Contaminated Soil Abatement", Journal of the

American Medical Association, JAMA, 4/7/93.

4. Haunted Housing: How Toxic Scare Stories are Spooking the Public Out of House and Home, by Cassandra Moore, Cato Institute, 1997.
5. "Protect your family from Lead in the Home", EPA 747-K-94-001 1995.
6. "Review of Studies, Lead Abatement Effectiveness", EPA 747-R-9-006 1995.
7. "Lead Based Paint" is defined as any paint or other coating that contains lead in excess of 1.0 milligrams per square centimeter, 0.5 percent by weight or 5,000 parts per million.