

# Spring DIY plans? Make sure you are renovating lead-safe

By Keri Perez

Spring is nearly here – and so is the season of home renovations.

Renovating a home can be an exciting project, but if your house is one of the 68% in Yellowstone County built before 1978, there's a chance it might contain lead-based paint. Lead exposure can be harmful, especially to young children and pregnant women, so it is important to stay informed and take the right steps.

Here are some key questions and tips to help you steer clear of lead during renovation.

## Key questions to ask:

- Was your home built before 1978? Homes built before 1978 are more likely to have lead paint. Knowing your home's age can help you figure out the risk of lead exposure.
- Have you tested for lead paint? Think about hiring a pro to test for lead paint or grab a home testing kit. A professional can give you a thorough check.
- Are you hiring a certified renovator? Make sure any contractor you hire is certified in lead-safe practices. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has guidelines to prevent lead contamination.
- Do you have a lead-safe work plan? Create a plan that includes sealing off the work area, wearing the right gear, and cleaning up properly to keep lead dust to a minimum.
- How will you protect your family during renovation? Think about moving family members, especially kids and pregnant women, out of the home during the renovation. Use plastic sheeting to contain dust and make sure there's good ventilation.

## Proactive ways to avoid lead exposure

### Testing and Inspection

- Regular inspections: Get your home checked for lead regularly, especially if it was built before 1978.
- Testing water and soil: Lead can also be in soil and water, so test those areas for extra safety.

### Safe Renovation Practices

- Wet sanding and scraping: These methods create less dust than dry sanding.
- High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) vacuums: Use vacuums with HEPA filters to effectively clean up any lead dust.

### Education and Awareness

- Community resources: Check out local resources and programs that offer information and help on lead safety, including [RiverStoneHealth.org/Lead](http://RiverStoneHealth.org/Lead) and [EPA.gov/Lead](http://EPA.gov/Lead).
- Stay informed: Keep up with the latest guidelines and safety practices regarding lead exposure.

By tackling these questions and being proactive, you can significantly cut down the risk of lead exposure during your renovation, making it a safer space for you and your family.

### **Lead testing opportunities**

RiverStone Health Public Health Services provides lead testing for children aged 6 and under through a simple finger poke. You can typically get results in under five minutes. RiverStone Health also provides resources for preventing lead poisoning, featuring nutrition advice from Women, Infants & Children (WIC). Call 406-247-3305 to request testing.

Free soil testing will be available on Saturday, April 26, and Saturday, May 3, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in collaboration with Gainan's Heights Flowers & Garden at 810 Bench Blvd. To have your soil tested, bring up to five bags of soil in separate clean and clear quart-sized plastic bags. Plastic bags should be at least half full of soil. Be sure the soil is dry and free of debris and plant material.

*Keri Perez is a prevention health specialist at RiverStone Health. She can be reached at 406-247-3305 or [PublicHealth@RiverStoneHealth.org](mailto:PublicHealth@RiverStoneHealth.org).*