

## FAQ lead paint elimination

### Why is lead paint a problem?

Lead paint is one of the most widespread sources of lead exposure today. No known safe levels of lead exposure are known for children,<sup>1</sup> and increasing evidence shows that even low levels of lead exposure is harmful for adults.<sup>2</sup>

### What are the effects of lead exposure?

Childhood lead exposure damages the developing brain, as well as the nervous, immune, reproductive and cardiovascular systems, and causes a range of adverse effects. These include loss of IQ, shortening of attention span, alteration of behaviour, dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, hypertension, renal impairment, immunotoxicity and toxicity to the reproductive organs. For the most part, these effects are permanent, irreversible and untreatable.<sup>3</sup>

### Wasn't lead paint banned?

The use of white lead was prohibited in 1921 by the countries that ratified the ILO White Lead Convention<sup>4</sup>, and lead in paint for home use was subsequently banned in most developed countries in the 1970s and -80s. However, lead paint remains unregulated in more than two-thirds of the countries in the world today.<sup>5</sup>

### Why do manufacturers use lead in paint?

Lead has mainly been added to paint as brightly colored pigments and driers, and as anti-corrosive agents. However, safe alternatives are available for all these uses, and today progressive manufacturers consider the use of lead in any type of paint as an obsolete technology.<sup>6</sup>

### What is the greatest barrier to eliminating lead paint world-wide?

One of the biggest hurdles to overcome is the lack of awareness about the use of lead in paint and the hazards of lead exposure. Policy makers are unaware of the national implications, manufacturers are unaware of the impact of their toxic products, and consumers do not know to ask for paint without lead.

Two other important barriers are that chemicals are typically low on countries' political agendas, and many national regulatory systems are slow and inefficient.

### Why focus on lead in paint when there are worse environmental problems?

There are certainly many significant environmental problems in the world today. However, there are three vital reasons to focus on lead in paint

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs379/en/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(18\)30025-2/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(18)30025-2/fulltext)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.who.int/ceh/publications/leadguidance.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C013](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C013)

<sup>5</sup>

[https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/22001/Glbbal%20Update%20Final%20Version%202011\\_Oct.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/22001/Glbbal%20Update%20Final%20Version%202011_Oct.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.pcimag.com/blogs/14-pci-blog/post/101322-time-for-the-use-of-lead-compounds-to-come-to-an-end-in-all-paints>

1. It is highly dangerous – especially to children. Children who are exposed to lead in paint suffer irreversible neurological damage that limits their future success and happiness, and limits their ability to be positive, contributing citizens to their countries.
2. It is easily solvable. Lead in paint has been banned in the developed world for forty years or more. The alternatives and technology are readily available and cost effective.
3. It is more cost effective to act now rather than later. The United States is still dealing with a legacy of having used lead paint for many years. One study estimates that the resulting loss in adult earnings due to childhood lead exposure costs the U.S. economy \$43 billion. We can completely avoid that cost if we act now.

**What is the number of countries that have established legally binding controls on lead content of paint since the initiation of IPEN’s global lead paint elimination campaign?**

IPEN’s Global Campaign to Eliminate Lead Paint was initiated in 2008. Since then, legally binding controls, including laws and mandatory paint standards, have been adopted in 17 countries.

However, as of August 2017, only 67 of the world’s 193 countries had legally binding controls to limit the production, import and sale of lead paints.<sup>7</sup>

**What is the estimated lifetime cost of lost IQ due to lead exposure?**

Loss of IQ due to lead exposure results in an overall loss of lifetime earnings, which leads to a significant economic impact on a country. Attina &Trasande estimated that the economic impact of childhood lead exposures on national economies in low and middle income countries is a total loss of Int\$977 per year.<sup>8</sup> The estimates per region are:

- \$134.7 billion in Africa (4.03% of gross domestic product (GDP) in that region),
- \$142.3 billion in Latin America and the Caribbean (2.04% of GDP in that region), and
- \$699.9 billion in Asia (1.88% of GDP in that region).

Country estimates can be found at

<https://med.nyu.edu/pediatrics/research/environmentalpediatrics/leadexposure>

On the other hand, preventing and controlling lead hazards is highly-cost effective. In a study by Gould comparing the cost of lead hazard controls with the cost of lead exposure (including costs for medical treatment, lost earnings and tax revenue, special education, lead-linked ADHD cases, and cost of and criminal activity) in the United States, it was estimated that for each for each dollar invested in lead hazard control, the return was \$17–\$221.<sup>9</sup>

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[https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/22001/Glbbal%20Update%20Final%20Version%202011\\_Oct.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/22001/Glbbal%20Update%20Final%20Version%202011_Oct.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>8</sup> [https://med.nyu.edu/pediatrics/sites/default/files/pediatrics/worldmap/images/Attina-Trasande\\_EHP2013.pdf](https://med.nyu.edu/pediatrics/sites/default/files/pediatrics/worldmap/images/Attina-Trasande_EHP2013.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2717145/>