

## ***Lead in Children***

### **What is lead?**

Lead is a naturally occurring metal and is used widely in manufacturing. Lead dust and residue can be swallowed or breathed in, and large amounts can be stored in bones and teeth, which can be harmful.

### **Why Is Lead Dangerous for Children?**

Children are especially vulnerable to lead. Even small amounts can cause serious health problems, including:

- Headaches, tiredness, muscle pain or tummy pain
- Lower intelligence (IQ)
- Behavioural and learning difficulties
- Growth and hearing issues
- In severe cases: seizures or coma

Very high lead levels or untreated lead exposure can lead to permanent health effects.

### **Ways children be exposed to lead?**

- Lead-based paint in homes built before 1970
- Dust from renovation or contaminated soil
- Old toys or furniture with lead-based paint
- Drinking water from old lead-soldered pipes
- Imported toys, candies, spices (e.g. turmeric and saffron) or cosmetics (e.g. kohl, kajal or surma)
- Imported ceremonial powders, or Ayurvedic or traditional medicines or remedies
- Lead dust brought home by household members who are exposed to lead.

### **Ways to reduce lead exposure for children**

- Wash their hands and toys often
- Don't let children play in contaminated soil or near renovations
- Keep lead dust out by removing shoes indoors
- Feed children a diet rich in:
  - **Iron** (lean meat, fortified cereals) – can lower lead absorption
  - **Calcium** (milk, cheese, broccoli) – can lower lead absorption
  - **Vitamin C** (oranges, strawberries) – can increase lead excretion by the kidneys
- Flush taps for 2-3 minutes if water hasn't been used in a while
- Lead dust in home or vehicle to be cleaned using wet mops/wipes or HEPA vacuumed\*

*\*HEPA vacuums are equipped with a filtered designed to trap very small dust particles and allergens.*