

Lead Contaminated Chicken Eggs and Other Foods

Contact with lead-based paint chips and lead contaminated dusts are the most common causes of lead poisoning in infants and children. However, children may also get lead poisoning from contaminated food and/or water.

A lead contaminated chicken egg is an example of possible way of getting lead poisoning from food. This has caused some concern to local residents, due to the increasing popularity of raising chickens in the City of Madison and other urban areas throughout Dane County. Most often, chickens are exposed to lead during feeding by eating soils contaminated with high lead containing materials, such as lead-based paint chips, fishing sinkers, and/or shotgun pellets. Once the chicken eats the lead containing materials, lead is deposited in the eggs, with the highest levels of lead usually found in the yolk and shell.

Other possible sources of lead in your diet may come from imported candies, glazed ceramics, water from lead service pipes or lead containing plumbing fixtures, and leafy vegetables grown in lead contaminated soils.

Although we don't want to discourage raising chickens or growing vegetable gardens, Public Health Madison & Dane County advises persons who are considering these activities get their soil tested for lead. Chicken eggs or other food items and soils suspected of lead contamination may be tested at the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene, (800) 442-4618 or (608) 224-6202. Drinking water suspected to contain lead can be tested by PHMDC; contact our offices at (608) 266-4821 for this service.