

Healthy Home Assessments, Lead Remediation, and Weatherization

by Corinna Bisgaier

How do you know when it's time to call Isles to get a healthy homes assessment? For many folks, it's when they feel the cold air coming in, notice a new drip, their furnace stops working or they smell something weird in their home. Each of those instances is a time to get in touch with us, but the most important and serious reason is invisible and has no smell. In fact, you may think that you are taking great care of your home without any idea that there is a hidden problem that can cause asthma, cognitive delays, ADHD, disruptive behavior, and even lower your child's IQ – lead.

When I met with Cherie and Barbora in our Healthy Homes service area, I asked them about why they were so impassioned about their work. Cherie told me a story that I just can't shake. She went to do a healthy homes assessment at a house where the homeowners proudly showed her how they'd remodeled to enclose their front porch so that their young children had a nice place to play. They'd created a lovely, sunny spot filled with their children's toys, and even capped off with a bowl of fruit on the table. As delightful as it looked, Cherie had been in enough homes that she was worried about what she saw.



She asked the parents how often they opened the windows and they said that they liked to open them whenever the weather was nice enough so that the children could enjoy the fresh air. Which, normally, would be a great answer, especially in Trenton where there just aren't enough safe and inviting outdoor places to play. However, when she heard that, Cherie got chills.

See, Cherie knows that homes built before 1978 (most of the housing stock in Trenton) were painted with lead paint, especially on the exterior of the homes. Chances are that those homes were painted over year after year without ever stripping away the old lead paint. What that means is that whenever that paint gets worn and chipped, lead dust is released into the air.



Every time those windows are opened, the lead dust comes into the house. Many times, lead paint is hidden under layers of paint on the windowsills, door jams and moldings. So, over time, with normal wear and tear, lead dust ends up in the air, on all the surfaces, even coating that lovely bowl of fruit until someone takes a bite and ingests or inhales it.

When young children get screened for lead (and all children should be), it's helpful to know that the CDC currently uses a blood lead reference value (BLRV) of 3.5 micrograms per deciliter to identify children with dangerous blood lead levels. However, there's no amount of lead that is safe to be exposed to. Even small amount of lead can harm children.

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Luckily, getting a healthy homes assessment from Isles is free for anyone living in Mercer County, and we offer some amazing benefits in collaboration with the county and state that will help to pay for remediation and to make your home more safe and energy-efficient. If there is any doubt in your mind, call Cherie or Barbora and schedule an assessment to learn more about how you can save money while making your home more safe, healthy, and energy-efficient.