

# SOIL SAFETY

We know it can be a challenge to keep children from playing in the dirt and putting their hands in their mouths. Dust, dirt, and mud are kid magnets! But we now know how dirty that dirt really might be. We're particularly concerned about poisonous chemicals that may be in the soil, including ones that occur naturally and those that come from industry, gasoline, old paints, and products used in the home and garden such as pesticides, herbicides, and cleaners.

Arsenic and lead are two toxic substances that are in Puget Sound soils due to natural and human sources. Arsenic causes cancer, and lead is linked to developmental delay and lowered IQs in children. The amounts we have found in our soils are not enough to be an immediate health risk for most people but since the substances are harmful, we encourage all people to take care not to eat or breathe in dirt or dust.

Children are most at risk from contaminated soil because they tend to put dirty hands and objects in their mouths. Also, children's bodies are more easily hurt by chemicals. Good nutrition keeps the body strong and helps prevent toxins from becoming absorbed. In addition, we suggest you follow these guidelines to reduce exposure to contaminated soils:

## Inside

- Wash hands and face after playing in the soil, especially before eating
- Take off shoes when entering the building or classroom area
- Damp-mop and dust often to control dust
- Wash toddler toys and pacifiers often
- Encourage a balanced diet to help keep lead from being a problem in the body

## Outside

- Keep children off contaminated dirt - consider putting down bark or grass on bare soil
- Do not eat or drink contaminated soil
- Use soap and water, not "waterless soaps"
- Repair chipped or peeling paint because old paint may contain lead
- Wash garden veggies and fruits well and don't grow them near old painted structures