

## ***Lead exposure: Problem has not gone away***

In 1983 the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., underwent a renovation that removed more than 30 layers of old, flaky paint. The project was finished in 1987 -- but Congress doesn't seem to have improved its appearance since then. And now it all makes sense! They must have left behind a few layers of brain-damaging lead paint.

Recognized as the most significant environmental hazard to children in the U.S. and Canada (children's growing bodies absorb lead easily), high blood levels of lead are associated with irreversible IQ deficits, attention-related behavior problems and poor academic achievement. (Does that sound like Congress to you?) But in 2012, when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lowered the safe threshold for lead exposure (from a blood level of 10 mcg to 5 mcg), doubling the number of U.S. kids at risk for lead poisoning to 500,000, legislators slashed the national lead abatement program budget from \$29 million to \$2 million. (Does that sound appropriate to you?)



### **Drs. Oz & Roizen**

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Now it's up to communities and families to take up the campaign.

- Lead was banned from most paint in 1978; if your house or local schools and recreational facilities were built before then, have them checked for lead paint. An effort in Rochester, N.Y., resulted in a 68 percent decline in children with elevated blood lead levels. Call your city and state Environmental Protection Agency for info on how to proceed.
- Get a home-testing kit (about \$10) and check anywhere you find peeling or cracking paint. For advice on safe removal, call the National Lead Information Center at 800-424-LEAD.

*Dr. Mehmet Oz is host of "The Dr. Oz Show" and Dr. Mike Roizen is chief medical officer at the Cleveland Clinic.*