

## Testing\* Painted Surfaces

**Background:** Most homes and apartment buildings (about 75%) built before 1978 have some lead paint with buildings built before 1960 having the most lead paint. While lead can be present in paint on any painted surface, lead-based paint is most often found in kitchens and bathrooms, and on windows, doors and railings in the interior. Exterior paint used on clapboards or shingles, window trim, porches, columns and railings of pre-1978 homes usually had high lead content. Surfaces that have been painted several times may have layers of lead paint underneath layers of non-lead paint.

**Method:** To test for lead in paint:



1. If dirty, clean the surface with a household cleaner, rinse and dry.
2. Cut a small V-shaped notch (about ¼ inch long) to expose all painted layers down to the bare surface.
3. Activate a LeadCheck® Swab according to the instructions.
4. Rub the activated Swab into the notch to determine if any of the paint layers contains lead.
5. Examine the Swab tip and/or test surface for a color change to pink or red.

### Interpretation of Results:

1. If the Swab and or the test surface turn a pink to red color, the test is positive for lead. Only lead produces a pink to red color with LeadCheck® Swabs.
2. If the Swab and or test surface did not turn pink or red no hazardous level of lead was detected. Use the confirmation card to confirm that the LeadCheck® reagents were active (the circle on the card should turn bright pink).
3. If the Swab and or test surface turn orange, the result is negative for lead but may be positive for barium, which was sometimes added to paint as an extender. If lead were also present in the paint the Swab tip and or test surface would turn pink before turning orange.
4. If the Swab and or test surface turn purple, the result is negative for lead but positive for tin.

Additional information is available for:    Testing Red Paint  
  Testing Paint on Plaster, Gypsum and Stucco  
  Testing Marine and Industrial Paints or Lead Chromate Paints

\*LeadCheck® Swabs are a versatile and sensitive screening tool for the detection of lead on any surface. This note provides a suggested method to allow testing for a specific application. Additional information and help are available by calling 800-262-5323 or 508-651-7881.