

home & family

Lead Paint Alert

Even stripped wood can pose a danger to your health. Here's what you should know.

DO-IT-YOURSELF HOME renovators beware: Lead paint is more dangerous than previously thought, according to two recent reports. One shows that even lead levels in the body below 10 micrograms, which are presently considered acceptable for children, can adversely affect a child's IQ. The other report indicates that wood that has been chemically stripped of lead-based coatings can retain harmful amounts of lead, which are released when the wood is sanded or worked on with power tools. (It appears that alkaline stripping can drive lead deep into the wood.)

If you live in a home built before 1978, check for lead before starting a project. Home test kits are available at hardware stores, and professional lead testers (found in the yellow pages) offer more extensive, and expensive, checkups. If you find lead, don't do the project yourself; hire professionals.



Paint-stripping chemicals plus sandpaper can equal poison.



A DANGEROUS TRIP TO SCHOOL

The conditions inside your child's bus may be as risky as those on the road.

RIDING THE SCHOOL BUS COULD PROVE PERILOUS to your child's health if the bus runs on diesel fuel, which most do. Scientists at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), a New York City-based environmental nonprofit, and the Coalition for Clean Air, a Los Angeles-

based environmental nonprofit, recently tested four diesel school buses in Los Angeles and found that the exhaust levels inside the buses were more than eight times the average levels outside. The NRDC believes these high levels may be fairly typical of diesel school buses nationwide. Breathing diesel exhaust, according to the group's scientists, can exacerbate asthma, retard lung development, and increase the risk of developing certain cancers.

Some school districts are replacing diesel buses with cleaner alternatives. To find out if yours is one of them, visit www.nrdc.org/air/transportation/schoolbus/schoolbus.pdf. In the meantime, Julie Masters, NRDC's staff attorney, advises the following: Instruct your child to sit in the front seats with the windows open (diesel exhaust is worst at the back of the bus); form a car pool with other families; or, if possible, have your child walk to school. —J.T.M.

PRODUCT REVIEW

Modern Mood Music

The Product: Herbal Harmonies three-CD set

The Promise: These three CDs—named Kava Kava, Ginkgo Biloba, and Ginseng—claim to use “psychoacoustics” to induce effects similar to those that result from taking these herbs orally: relaxation, mental focus, and increased energy, respectively.

Our Verdict: Although the herb titles seemed gimmicky, the music worked. The easy tempo of the violins, guitars, and flutes on Kava Kava soothed our stressed nerves; the flowing melodies and jazzy riffs of the Ginkgo Biloba CD helped us concentrate; and the upbeat percussion, horns, guitars, and strings on the Ginseng CD perked us up near the end of the day.

Whatever your mood and whether you understand psychoacoustics or not, each of these CDs provides easy tunes for summer evenings.

To Buy: The three-CD set costs \$29.95; each CD is \$15.95; 800-788-6670; www.the-relaxationcompany.com.

