



The Bug Family Learns About Lead  
by Brian English

Once upon a time, a family of bugs lived in a garden. There was Momma Bug, Poppa Bug and their daughter, Latasha. After a rain filled night, the bugs awoke to bright sunshine.

"Good morning! How did everyone sleep last night?" asked Poppa Bug.

"Great. I was tired from working in the garden yesterday," answered Momma Bug.

Latasha, their daughter replied, "The rain kept me up, raindrops kept dripping on my leaf." She did look tired.

From the kitchen Momma called, "Breakfast is ready."

Latasha ran into the kitchen and sat at the table.

With a frown on his face that Latasha didn't notice, Poppa asked, "Latasha, have you forgotten something?"

"Yes, I left my doll in my room," answered Latasha. "I planned to take her with me this morning to Tina's house."

"That's not what I meant," said Poppa Bug.

Latasha looked puzzled. "Well, Dad, what DID you mean?" she said.

"You sat down at the table and forgot to do something very important before eating your breakfast," Poppa reminded her. "Would you please go wash your hands?"

Latasha ran to the sink. She grabbed the soap and began to scrub her hands. Momma and Poppa Bug joined her.

"Dad, why is it we ALWAYS have to wash our hands before eating?" asked Latasha as she was drying her hands.



"Even though you can't see the dirt on your hands, it is there. By keeping your hands clean you are protected from having dirt get on the food which you eat. You see, dirt has LEAD in it. When lead gets into your body it CAN MAKE YOU SICK," warned Poppa Bug.

As Latasha sat down to breakfast she could smell the toast, eggs and oatmeal Momma Bug had made. Momma Bug made sure her family ate good, healthy food. She knew it was important to prepare foods high in calcium and iron to keep them healthy and strong.

After finishing her breakfast, Latasha kissed her parents goodbye and left for Tina's house.

Poppa and Momma Bug got a pail of soapy water to mop the leaves of their garden home. They used a damp dust rag to dust the furniture to help protect their family from lead poisoning. They often told Latasha about how lead found in the dust, dirt and soil could make them sick. As they worked, they hummed the song Lead Can Hurt Us.

Latasha knocked on Tina's door. Tina welcomed her and suggested they take Tina's baby sister with them up to her room to play house. "We can watch the baby while we play," she said. "You know what? I got a new kitchen set for my birthday," Tina told Latasha.

"Goody, let's play with it. Shall we pretend to make cookies?" asked Latasha.

They took out the play dishes and toy stove. Tina found flour in her play cabinet and began to mix the dough. Some flour got on Latasha's wings, making them all white. The baby started laughing and knocked her pacifier on the floor. Tina quickly picked it up and was about to put it back in her sister's mouth when Latasha cried, "Stop, don't do that."

"Why not?" asked Tina. Latasha explained how in school they had learned about a poison called LEAD which could make them sick.

"My teacher said it was important to keep our hands away from our mouths. She told us that if baby things like pacifiers and toys fell to the floor they should be washed. She told us how to become lead poisoning prevention helpers." Latasha washed the pacifier and gave it to the baby.



"Hey, thanks, Latasha, for watching out for my sister," said Tina. "I thought the only way to get poisoned from lead is to eat paint chips."

"Yes," said Latasha. "You are right. NEVER EAT PAINT CHIPS. But eating paint chips is not the ONLY WAY we can become lead poisoned. We need to remember to wash our hands before we eat, to eat healthy foods and to keep our hands and toys out of our mouths. If we see a baby or our friends doing these things we must tell an adult. Either our parent or our care giver."

"You are a smart bug," Tina told Latasha. "You have helped me to learn and you have helped my sister, too. Thanks for washing off her pacifier. Thanks for helping her not to become lead poisoned. I am going to tell my mother about the things you taught me."

"Well," said Latasha proudly. "My teacher taught me to be a LEAD POISONING PREVENTION HELPER. I like being a lead poisoning prevention helper."

"How do you know if you have lead in your body?" asked Tina.

"When I was little, my mom took me to the clinic to have my blood tested," replied Latasha.

"I'm going to ask my mom if I ever had my blood tested like you," said Tina. "Let's finish making our cookies."

After they finished playing, Latasha went home for lunch.

"Hi, Latasha, did you have fun at Tina's?" Momma Bug asked. Latasha told her mother about playing at Tina's and about washing the pacifier.

"Well that was a very good thing to do. You're learning to be a Lead Poisoning Prevention Helper," said Momma Bug.

"I'm hungry, what's for lunch?" asked Latasha.

"We are having peanut butter and jelly, along with a fruit cup. But what is it we need to do before we eat?"

"I remember, I must wash my hands," said Latasha.



"That's right. You're such a good helper. Now hurry so we can eat," said Poppa Bug who had just returned from the hardware store.

The Ladybug family had their lunch, and then happily took their naps knowing that they were doing the right things to help keep home lead safe.

The End