

Lead and the Workplace: Protect Yourself



Lead exposure occurs in many industries like construction and manufacturing. It can also come from our favorite hobbies.

Lead exposure can happen during production that uses lead material and products. There is also a risk of exposure during recycling and disposal of these products.

What is lead and lead exposure?

Lead is a strong poison. When it enters your body over time, it can damage many organ systems, especially the brain and nervous system.

Lead enters the body when you breathe in dust that contains lead or lead dust. You can also swallow lead dust as you eat if you don't wash your hands before eating or drinking. Your exposure to lead can also affect your family if you bring lead dust on you when you come home.

Am I at risk?

You may be at risk if you work in:

- Construction
- Demolition
- Remodeling
- Welding
- Auto repair
- Jewelry-making
- Ceramics
- Law enforcement

You also may be at risk if you work with:

- Paint
- Tile
- Solder
- Pipes
- Sheet metal
- Batteries
- Ammunition

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Blood Lead Level (µg/dL)	As blood lead levels increase, so do symptoms.	
0-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reproductive health problems• Developmental delays in babies, children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hypertension• Kidney problems
	All of the conditions and symptoms of 0-19, plus:	
20-39	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headaches• Fatigue• Sleep problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor appetite• Constipation• Joint, muscle pain
	All of the conditions and symptoms of 0-39, plus:	
40 and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nerve damage (weakness, numbness, pain)• Gout	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anemia• Stomach pain

Should I worry about lead exposure?

Lead is common in industrial materials, so it's important to know how to protect yourself.

Lead poisoning is hard to detect. People can confuse many signs of lead poisoning with other illnesses.

The **only** way to be sure about your lead levels is to have your doctor conduct a blood test.

Does my family need to get tested?

Your exposure to lead can also affect your family. You could bring lead dust home on your body, clothes or hair. We recommend everyone living in your home get tested for lead.

What can I do to prevent lead exposure at work?

- Use a respirator.
- Wear protective clothing.
- Keep the work area clean using wet wipes.
- Vacuum your work area with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) vacuum.

Are there other things I can do to prevent lead exposure?

- Wash your hands before eating or drinking.
- Eat a diet rich in Vitamin C, Calcium, Iron.
- Keep protective clothing apart from regular clothes.
- Wash and store work clothes separately from other clothing.
- Shower as soon as you get home and before interacting with others.