

Lead and its effects on your health

What is lead and how can it affect me?

- Lead (also known by its chemical symbol, Pb) is a heavy metal used in some products.
- Exposure to high amounts of lead can cause buildup of lead in the body or lead poisoning.
- It is important to know how to check for lead poisoning and, better yet, learn ways to avoid its harmful effects.



Where is it found?

- Lead can be found in dust, soil, and old paint in pre-1978 housing.
- Low levels of lead have also been reported in tap water, pots and pans, glazed pottery, and toys
- Lead particles can also be found in fumes from jobs that involve metal processing.

Who is at risk?

- Children under six years old, including a developing fetus, are most at risk, but lead is bad for everyone.
- Since children are mentally and physically growing, it is more likely to slow their development.
- Adults exposed at work, specifically construction workers, artists, plumbers, manufacturers of bullets, ceramics, electrical components, battery and other recycling, glass, stained glass workers, and jewelers.

Symptoms of lead poisoning

Headaches, vomiting, stomachaches, poor appetite, and trouble sleeping. These may be hard to identify, so getting a lead blood test is the **best** way to check if you or someone else has lead poisoning.

What are the effects of lead exposure?

- High amounts of lead exposure can lead to brain damage, heart, reproductive, and developmental problems.



From CDC: [Prevent Children's Exposure to Lead](#)

Preventing exposure from water sources

- People can be exposed to lead in households through old pipes.
- If you are worried about lead in your water, pipes can be checked by calling a plumber. The EPA does **NOT** recommend water test kits at local hardware stores.
- The **most effective** method is to remove the source causing the lead exposure.
- If you can't remove pipes, some water filters remove lead. To be sure your water filter will actually remove lead, get one that's been certified by [NSF International](#) under both NSF/ANSI-53 (for total lead) and NSF/ANSI-42 (for fine particulate).
- Flushing water pipes for up to 2 minutes before drinking and using only cold tap water for drinking and cooking help reduce lead exposure.

Preventing exposure from other sources

- Talk to your health department about testing for lead in paint in a house built before 1978.
- Lead paint can be painted over. Hire a painter with EPA lead abatement certification (see Resources).
- Lead exposure in household dust from old ceilings and paint can be reduced by cleaning the house often.
- Vacuum with a **HEPA** filter and clean often with a damp microfiber mop to get rid of dust with lead particles. Pay special attention to kids' play areas
- For children and adults, eating a well-balanced diet can reduce lead absorbed by the body.
- If using or working at a firing range, wash well after leaving and change clothes (and wash them separately) to avoid bringing home lead.

Resources

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences:
[Lead, Lead and Your Health](#)

CDC: [Prevent Children's Exposure to Lead](#) [En Espanol: Prevenga la exposición de los niños al plomo](#)

EPA: [Lead Hotline - The National Lead Information Center](#), [The Lead-Safe Certified Guide to Renovate Right](#)

[EPA: A Consumer Tool for Identifying Point of Use \(POU\) Drinking Water Filters Certified to Reduce Lead](#)

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) [Lead: Information for Workers](#)

Little Things Matter Videos: [Crime of the Century: The Lead Pandemic](#)

References

"Lead and Drinking Water: Information for Health Professionals Across the United States." PEHSU. Accessed April 1, 2019.

"Jobs That May Have Lead Exposure." *Center for Disease Control and Prevention*, 18 June 2018, www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/lead/jobs.html. Accessed 1 Apr. 2019.

"Certain Metals Six Classes." *Six Classes*, www.sixclasses.org/videos/certain-metals. Accessed 1 Apr. 2019.

"Lead, your health and the environment." Lead Education Program. Accessed April 1, 2019.