

Adult Lead (Blood)



Does this test have other names?

Lead poisoning test, BLL

What is this test?

This test measures the levels of lead in your blood.

High levels of lead can be toxic. Complications include belly pain, constipation, a decline in thinking, and high blood pressure. Lead exposure can also cause reproductive problems. Women with high lead levels are more likely to have stillbirths or give birth to infants with lead poisoning. Men may have low sperm counts or abnormal sperm.

You may be exposed to lead through your work. Painting, battery manufacturing, and lead and zinc ore mining are a few jobs where lead poisoning has been reported. Although workplace hazards account for most cases of lead exposure, you can also come in contact with lead if your home is older and has lead-based paint or you use lead-glazed dishes or cookware.

Why do I need this test?

You may need this test if your past or current history shows a possible exposure to lead and if your healthcare provider suspects that you have lead poisoning symptoms. These symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Belly pain
- Muscle aches
- Insomnia
- Memory loss
- Vomiting
- Constipation
- Joint pains
- Headache
- Grouchiness
- Depression

In severe cases, symptoms include loss of consciousness and seizures.

What other tests might I have along with this test?

Your healthcare provider may also order other tests to find out whether you have dangerous levels of lead in your body. One such test is an X-ray fluorescence test to measure the level of lead in your bones.

What do my test results mean?

Test results may vary depending on your age, gender, health history, and other things. Your test results may be different depending on the lab used. They may not mean you have a problem. Ask your healthcare provider what your test results mean for you.

Results are given in micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL). The CDC says that blood levels in adults are considered high when they are 5 mcg/dL or more. The CDC's Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance (ABLES) is a national effort to lower lead blood levels in adults due to exposure at work to less than or equal to 10 mcg/dL.

If your results are high, it means you may have lead poisoning.

How is this test done?

The test is done with a blood sample. A needle is used to draw blood from a vein in your arm or hand.

Does this test pose any risks?

Having a blood test with a needle carries some risks. These include bleeding, infection, bruising, and feeling lightheaded. When the needle pricks your arm or hand, you may feel a slight sting or pain. Afterward, the site may be sore.

What might affect my test results?

Other factors aren't likely to affect your results.

How do I get ready for this test?

You don't need to prepare for this test. Be sure your healthcare provider knows about all medicines, herbs, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any illegal drugs you may use.

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