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Lead Poisoning

Also called: Plumbism

Lead is a metal that occurs naturally in the earth's crust. Lead can be found in all parts of our environment. Much of it comes from human activities such as mining and manufacturing. Lead used to be in paint; older houses may still have lead paint.

You could be exposed to lead by:

- Eating food or drinking water that contains lead. Water pipes in older homes may contain lead.
- Working in a job where lead is used
- Using lead in a hobby, such as making stained glass or lead-glazed pottery
- Using folk remedies such as herbs or foods that contain lead

Breathing air, drinking water, eating food, or swallowing or touching dirt that contains lead can cause many health problems. Lead can affect almost every organ and system in your body. In adults, lead can increase blood pressure and cause infertility, nerve disorders, and muscle and joint pain. It can also make you irritable and affect your ability to concentrate and remember.


Lead is especially dangerous for children. A child who swallows large amounts of lead may develop anemia, severe stomachache, muscle weakness, and brain damage. Even at low levels, lead can affect a child's mental and physical growth.

Agency for Toxic Substances Disease Registry


Start Here

- [About Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention \[https://www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/about/\]](https://www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/about/) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Lead \[https://www.epa.gov/lead\]](https://www.epa.gov/lead) (Environmental Protection Agency)
- [Learn about Lead \[https://www.epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead\]](https://www.epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead) (Environmental Protection Agency)

Diagnosis and Tests

- [Blood Test: Lead \(For Parents\) \[https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/test-lead.html\]](https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/test-lead.html) (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [\[https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/test-lead.html\]](https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/test-lead.html)
- [Heavy Metal Blood Test \[https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/heavy-metal-blood-test/\]](https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/heavy-metal-blood-test/)  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [\[https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-sangre-de-metales-pesados/\]](https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-sangre-de-metales-pesados/)

Prevention and Risk Factors

- [Hidden Hazards: Clearing Out Toxins in the Home \[https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2022/05/hidden-hazards\]](https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2022/05/hidden-hazards)  (National Institutes of Health)
Also in Spanish [\[https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/peligros-ocultos\]](https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/peligros-ocultos)
- [Preventing Childhood Lead Poisoning \[https://www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/prevention/\]](https://www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/prevention/) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Protect Your Family from Sources of Lead [<https://www.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-sources-lead>] (Environmental Protection Agency)

- Risk Assessment [<https://www.epa.gov/risk>] (Environmental Protection Agency)


Related Issues

- About Drinking Water [<https://www.cdc.gov/drinking-water/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- About Lead in Drinking Water [<https://www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/prevention/drinking-water.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- About Lead in Foods, Cosmetics, and Medicines [<https://www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/prevention/foods-cosmetics-medicines.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Lead [<https://wwwn.cdc.gov/TSP/substances/ToxSubstance.aspx?toxid=22>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Safety and Health Topics: Lead [<https://www.osha.gov/lead>] (Occupational Safety and Health Administration)

Specifics

- Basic Information about Lead in Drinking Water [<https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water>] (Environmental Protection Agency)
- Kohl, Kajal, Al-Kahal, Surma, Tiro, Tozali or Kwalli: By Any Name, Beware of Lead Poisoning [<https://www.fda.gov/cosmetics/cosmetic-products/kohl-kajal-al-kahal-surma-tiro-tozali-or-kwalli-any-name-beware-lead-poisoning>] (Food and Drug Administration)
- Lead (Pb) Air Pollution [<https://www.epa.gov/lead-air-pollution>] (Environmental Protection Agency)

Clinical Trials


- ClinicalTrials.gov: Lead Poisoning [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Lead+Poisoning%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles


References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Principles of environmental medicine: an educational case study of lead poisoning... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40703155>]
- Article: Medical Surveillance of Occupational Lead Exposure Using the EPA's Toxics Release... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40407200>]
- Article: Lead poisoning and its effects on bone density. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40320491>]
- Lead Poisoning -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Lead+Poisoning%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [<https://www.cdc.gov/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/>]
- Environmental Protection Agency [<https://www.epa.gov/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.epa.gov/>]
- National Center for Environmental Health [<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences [<https://www.niehs.nih.gov/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/scied/teachers/educacion>]

Children

- Lead Exposure Symptoms and Complications [<https://www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/symptoms-complications/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Lead Poisoning [<https://kids.niehs.nih.gov/topics/chemicals/lead>]  (National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences)

Women

- Avoiding Lead Exposure during Pregnancy [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/lead.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/lead.html>]

Patient Handouts

- Lead - nutritional considerations [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002428.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/002428.htm>]
- Lead levels - blood [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003360.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003360.htm>]
- Lead poisoning [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002473.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/002473.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

- Delta-ALA urine test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003457.htm>]
- Lead - nutritional considerations [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002428.htm>]
- Lead levels - blood [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003360.htm>]
- Lead poisoning [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002473.htm>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Lead Poisoning* is the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences [<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/leadpoisoning.html>] on *Lead Poisoning*

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