

# Health Risks of Lead

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- **Very hazardous to children.**
  - Damages the brain and central nervous system; can cause decreased intelligence, reading and learning difficulties, behavioral problems, and hyperactivity.
  - Damage can be irreversible, affecting children throughout their lives.
- **Hazardous to pregnant women.**
  - Damage to the fetus.
- **Also hazardous to workers and other adults.**
  - High blood pressure.
  - Loss of sex drive and/or capability.
  - Physical fatigue.
- **Lead exposure causes permanent damage.**



October 2011

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### **Children under six are most at risk from small amounts of lead.**

- Children are at a greater risk than adults because their bodies are developing. During normal and frequent playing or hand-to-mouth activity, children may swallow or inhale dust from their hands, toys, food or other objects.
- In children, lead can cause:
  - Nervous system and kidney damage.
  - Decreased intelligence, attention deficit disorder, and learning disabilities.
  - Speech, language, and behavior problems.

### **Among adults, pregnant women are especially at risk from exposure to lead.**

- Lead is passed from the mother to the fetus and can cause:
  - Miscarriages
  - Premature births
  - Brain damage
  - Low birth weight

### **Health effects of lead in adults include:**

- High blood pressure.
- Fertility problems in men and women.
- Digestive problems.
- Nerve disorders.
- Memory and concentration problems.
- Sexual disorders.
- Muscle or joint pain.